

The 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials

Interpreting Experience in the Landscape of Loss

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Abstract

Experiential memorials are agents of memory, constructing experiences for visitors that evoke memory, emotion, and thought. This project begins by defining the 'language of loss' and exploring the role of memorials through a literature review. It then investigates two seminal built memorials in order to gain a fuller understanding of how each employs this language of loss. Research into the contextual development of these memorials - Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982) in Washington D.C., and Michael Arad and Peter Walker's 9/11 Memorial (2011) in Lower Manhattan - provides a framework for interpreting each work.

Following preliminary literature and design research, a series of on-site research methods were undertaken to record and map the experience of visitors to each memorial. This process intends to reveal to what degree each memorial exemplifies this definition of the experiential memorial. Research strategies included the author's personal experience narrative, observations, photography and face-to-face interviews with visitors. Findings from this interaction, as well as interviews with knowledgeable individuals connected to each memorial, then informed a comparison of both memorials and suggestions for the design of future memorials. The findings and outcomes of this thesis aim to provide designers and scholars with knowledge of how to conceive and construct meaningful memorials that impact users and contribute to cultural memory.

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Introduction

"We wish to keep the dead truly alive in memory - alive as life is lived and felt, not just in action, but in human interaction. The difficulty is that memories fade with time. We seek to create objects of remembrance - a permanent public record in the form of monuments and memorials - that will serve as symbols of those who have gone before (or the events in which they participated) so that they may remain alive in the memory of the living."

-- Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, *"A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial"*

"Some of the most melancholy memorials are those which do not say much at all, leaving the viewer to make an effort, to become part of it, and to consequently form an affective bond. These memorials are not simply objects, but experiences. They invite participation rather than mere observance. The point is not seeking to find a 'cure' for grief, but accepting that sorrow is a necessary component of our human condition. Sometimes the experience may hang over the visitor like a question mark, something unsolvable, beyond comprehension, a wound kept open through the work of the memorial."

-- Jacky Bowring, *"A Field Guide to Melancholy"*

Research Aims

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of memorials as agents of memory, considering experience of such landscapes as inherently individual and subjective, and dependent on the context of both the visitor and the environment. This presents a unique challenge in which the designer, who may have no personal memory of the event itself, must balance the wide range of emotional responses produced by each individual's memory. Using techniques of abstraction, reflection and minimalism, designers can promote this subjective emotional experience, giving users the freedom to determine what the site means to them and how they wish to interact with both the physical memorial and their remembered connection to what is being memorialized.

Using experiential data collection methods at both the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the 9/11 Memorial, the author sought a better understanding of the effects of memorial design on human experience in such landscapes of loss. Despite a wealth of literature already available on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, very few works attempt to map or interpret user experience, which, for a memorial explained initially as an experiential narrative, is an impressive gap in an otherwise extensive body of knowledge. While this pivotal work has been critiqued for the past three decades, the 9/11 memorial,

which also relies on abstraction to influence visitor experience, has only recently been opened to the public. The generation with a direct memory of the Vietnam War has dwindled, while the numbers of people, worldwide, who recall the events of 9/11 remains high. Given this difference in age and cultural memory, there is a unique opportunity to compare the experience of visitors to these influential memorial landscapes, and in doing so, better understand how each promotes subjective experience and facilitates a dialogue between an individual and their memory of a tragic event.

Method of Inquiry

Three different forms of data collection were used for this research: observations, photography, and face-to-face interviews. Observations at each site included recording frequency and location of behaviors on site and annotating them on a site map. Certain expected behaviors like touching engraved names, engaging in conversation, leaving a memento, closing eyes, crying, etc., were noted along with less obvious behaviors. Photography was employed to observe patterns in movement, duration, small group ecology, responses to climatic factors, etc. Lastly, short in-person interviews were conducted at various locations within each memorial space. Through this combination of methods, an understanding was gained of how each memorial's design provokes specific feelings, thoughts, memories, behaviors and patterns of movement from each visitor. To best comprehend these varying perspectives, observations were made at different times of day, under different climatic conditions, and across both weekdays and weekends. Finally, the experiential information collection was used to develop a series of maps explaining and interpreting user experience at the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials, comparing the memorials to one another, as well as across user groups and time frames.

Limitations of Study

Given the limited time frame for this project, the sample size for interviews and observations cannot be considered scientifically significant. Aimed at an experiential description of each site, this research is fundamentally subjective, qualitative, and does not attempt to consider all points of view, user groups, or site conditions. Because the purpose is also to expose differences in experience based on individual history and circumstance, broad comparisons made between memorials are simply suggested within the limited scope of this research.

Thesis Framework

After defining a “language of loss,” both study sites - the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials - will

be introduced. Information regarding the design competitions that created the memorials, design controversy, political influences, and other contextual factors contributing to their politically, emotionally and socially charged sites, will then be presented.

Following this background, the author will share her experience of each place through narrative and photographic essays. Following this, observational, photographic and conversational information collected in each site visit will be presented. This data will be used to “interpret experience,” comparing and contrasting trends observed at each memorial site, primarily using information collected through observation and conversation. Using this knowledge, a series of design strategies, intentions and philosophies that may contribute to effective memorial design will be outlined.

1 Memorialization

Defining the Language of Loss

Prior to an investigation of experience at the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials, it is imperative to define the common, yet complex vocabulary underpinning these landscapes of loss. Memory, memorial, monument, and melancholy are seemingly simple terms, but underlying them is a complex set of meanings that together constitute a language of loss.

The Memorial:

In *Memory, Myth and the National Mall* (2008), Barry Spector articulates the essential difference between monument and memorial: “We erect memorials so as not to forget; we build monuments so that we will always remember. Whereas memorials mark the reality of endings, monuments embody the myths of beginnings, and if America is about anything, it is about beginnings.” Thus, Spector suggests, these architectural types are differentiated solely based on their relationship to national memory. Caroline McDonald (2009) cites critic Arthur Danto in her dissertation entitled *Designing a Sense of Place*, explaining that “the term ‘monument’ signifies celebration, positive remembrance, and the eternal present, while the term ‘memorial’ denotes the sacred, mourning, and the finality of the past.” She continues to differentiate the monument from the memorial in terms of form – monuments are generally large, towering, “monumental,” whereas memorials are “smaller” and more “intimate” in nature, “encompass[ing] less tangible forms of remembrance.”

There is something about the emotional space created that further separates the monument from the memorial. Marita Sturken (1997) describes the memorial as “contemplative rather than declarative.” In contrast to the celebratory nature of the monument, the memorial provides a different kind of space; a space less about pride and more about confrontation with one's own self. Memorials are a place for one to deeply feel, think, and question. Sturken adds to this characterization: “Monuments are not generally built to commemorate defeats; the defeated dead are remembered in memorials. While a monument most often signifies victory, a memorial refers to the life or lives sacrificed for a particular set of values. Memorials embody grief, loss, and tribute or obligation; in so doing, they serve to frame particular historical narratives” (Sturken, 1991). As containers of memory, memorials have a powerful capacity to connect individuals; to connect those living in the present with memories of the past. Jeffrey Ochsner speaks of this phenomena when he writes:

We wish to keep the dead truly alive in memory - alive as life is lived and felt, not just in action, but in human interaction. The difficulty is that memories fade with time. We seek to create objects of remembrance - a permanent public record in the form of monuments and memorials - that will serve as symbols of those who have gone before (or the events in which they participated) so that they may remain alive in the memory of the living.

Memory

Entangled in this definition of memorial is the concept of memory. Our relationship with past events hinges on how we remember those events throughout time, both as an individual and as a culture. McDonald (2009) explains, "Cultural identity is based not just on a common history, but on a common memory of that history. Individual pasts and identities play into the formulation of this remembrance creating a heterogeneous narrative." Thus, the narrative of our past is an assemblage of both personal and collective memory.

Yet as our present continuously changes, these memories likewise adapt to form a new story of the past. Reciprocally, our story of the past defines our place in the present, establishing a continuously evolving cyclical relationship with memory at the heart of identity, perception and nostalgia (McDonald, 2009). McDonald further explains this relationship:

As individuals habitually view history through the lens of present moment, their memories are rarely accurate and nostalgia serves to further dilute them with the addition of general forgetfulness, the deliberate erasure of painful memories, and a highly romanticized vision of the realities of the past... Nostalgia is employed by people and cultures to distance themselves from the painful and disturbing actualities of history, particularly those that conflict with contemporary social values and practices.

Therefore, we must see experience of memorials throughout time as equally dependent upon this lens of the present; as conditions of the present influence memories of the past, reminders of the past produce new meanings and experiences.

In *9/11 and the Culture of Commemoration*, David Simpson (2006) describes the age in which we live as a "memory boom" - a time dedicated to absorbing all of the horrific memories of the past in an effort to understand. He writes,

A proper acknowledgement of the enormity of human cruelty... has often seemed to insist that we not pass into a future that is forgetful of the history of atrocity, even that we reenact the primary shock of suffering itself as a state not to be overcome but endlessly made present. This has led to a besetting sense of bad faith about both forgetting (as if we could, but we do), and remembering.

In considering a memorial for a horrific event, one must ask first how gruesomely, realistically, and forcefully we want to be confronted with the past. Ken Worpole (2003) proposes the impossibility of re-creating the devastating atmosphere of the holocaust in the present time: "it can never emulate or simulate... the original setting. Any intervention is both simultaneously an embroidery and a displacement of historical truth." Regardless of whether or not it is possible, we must first determine

how we would like to remember; do we want a permanent reminder of something so gruesome and inhumane? Can one achieve both emotional resolution and complete historical accuracy simultaneously? How should a memorial impact one's memory? The 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials provide time and space to face these difficult memories - unsettling channels through which Americans can interact with collective memory and national history. As these memories evolve and fade, the way we relate to such places - and to our own memories of these events - will also change.

Melancholy

Melancholy is not simply sadness; it is a pleasure in being sad. Part of acknowledging the variety of emotions inevitable in everyday life means designing for more than the purely happy. "Wellbeing is, after all, a condition of balance, one that also requires sadness," writes Jacky Bowring (2008) in *A Field Guide to Melancholy*. "While it is important that architecture and landscape can elicit positive, 'happy' feelings, there needs to be places to feel sorrow. Churches and cemeteries provide formalised settings for grief, mourning and contemplation, but beyond such places there are other sites which might be sought out for their melancholy" (Bowring, 2008).

Memorials, conceptually, provide such a melancholy space; "As markers of things lost they are the archetypal apparatus of grief" (Bowring, 2008). Yet in their physical conception, some memorials fall short in this regard, unable to reach into the deep emotional space of the visitor. Bowring (2009) writes,

To lose melancholy is to be deprived of one of the imagination's refuges, the dark interior realm where thoughts fly. They fuel one another. Melancholy slows things, allows for percolation, facilitates solitude and solace for imagination. And imagination makes space for melancholy, they work together to construct the allied experiences of nostalgia, reverie, sorrow, shadows.

This slowness plays an essential role in differentiating the melancholic nature of the two memorials studied throughout this paper.

Just as melancholy has its place, it likewise has its time. Bowring (2008) explains:

The falling of darkness and play of shadows suggest the time of melancholy. Those liminal lines between seasons, and between day and night, evoke the lingering sense of time passing. Darkness can be seen as distinct from light, or happiness, and both senses are inherent in melancholy.... Darkness draws veils, boundaries between things dissolve into the indeterminate light of dusk. The eye succumbs, and there is a drift into poignancy. There is no coincidence that pupil dilation occurs not only with darkness, but also with sadness.

The dark, slow, sad and melancholy are the materials with which designers may build powerful windows

into the past and powerful memorials in the present.

Subjective Experience

Central to this study of memorial experience is the reality that no place is the same to each visitor. Contextual considerations like weather, time of day, number of other visitors, as well as the personal history, opinions and attitudes of the individual all contribute to the experience of a place. In *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, Ken Worpole (2003) explains:

Since different people can experience the same landscape in equally different ways, we have to assume that meaning is the result of the interaction between subjective apprehension and material reality. Yet subjective reactions find themselves learned: those who find themselves unexpectedly in wilderness landscapes, with only a minimal knowledge... are likely to have a much more disturbing and disconcerting experience than those for whom the terrain is both familiar and loved.

Thus, Worpole suggests that people are either attracted to or repelled by a landscape depending on “innate animal instincts and habits” - feelings of comfort or fear produced by the experience of the place (2003). Therefore, despite looking for larger trends, it is even more imperative to avoid generalizations of experience in these memorial landscapes. We must acknowledge the invisible story of past and present that affords each individual experience.

The Experiential Memorial

Both the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials fall into the category of the experiential memorial - a relatively recent phenomenon. “The origins of site-based, experiential memorials in America... began in the mid-twentieth century as a reaction to traditional representational memorials, ‘empty’ modernist formalism, and a growing desire for the public commemoration of the country’s significant history, leaders, and events,” explains McDonald. She describes such work as “participatory commemorative art” - art that is “defined by its site-specific and experiential design, abstract formal elements, and unique ability to present both personal and collective memory” (McDonald, 2009).

This kind of art requires a divergence from the traditional, cliched forms of memorialization like the overly-present upright, white icon, and the triumphant statue atop a podium. As Bowring (2008) writes, memorials that employ these conventional strategies “fail to become effective, affective moments in the landscape, to trigger an emotional response. Other memorials fail through their efforts to ‘close the wound’, to create a sense of completion at the site of tragedy.” She specifically cites those that rely on “memorial arithmetic,” a fixation on the numerical statistics of the event, as ineffective attempts at

conveying loss. “Arguably such ‘data’ can objectify the nature of loss, through denaturing it, turning it into mere numbers, in order to bring resolution and an end to grief. Yet, if sites of memory simply become tick-boxes, how might they move the beholders, to appreciate the tragic, to experience melancholy?” asks Bowring (2008). This relates to James Young’s differentiation of those memorials which are overdetermined, attempting to dictate one’s experience, and those that are underdetermined, leaving interpretation up to the visitor, and maintaining relevance throughout time (Young, 2011). Bowring (2008) re-articulates this distinction, emphasizing the forceful statement of the memorial which at first appears quiet and subtle:

Some of the most melancholy memorials are those which do not say much at all, leaving the viewer to make an effort, to become part of it, and to consequently form an affective bond. These memorials are not simply objects, but experiences. They invite participation rather than mere observance. The point is not seeking to find a ‘cure’ for grief, but accepting that sorrow is a necessary component of our human condition. Sometimes the experience may hang over the visitor like a question mark, something unsolvable, beyond comprehension, a wound kept open through the work of the memorial.

The physical and emotional wound of both sites studied in this paper remains central to their design conception; the 9/11 memorial maintaining the footprints of the original towers, highlighting the wound to the Manhattan skyline, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial cut into the earth of Washington D.C.’s National Mall appearing as a physical wound on the landscape of America’s capitol.

Both the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials can be understood as “a solid to make us feel the void” - a paradox common to all memorials, according to *Paul Goldberger in Up From Zero: politics, architecture, and the rebuilding of New York* (2004). He explains that effective memorialization is reached only when the designer begins “to understand the depths of our experience of architectural form and to think... about why certain kinds of form and space can inspire the most profound emotions.” He continues:

The experience of a great memorial, like great religious architecture, is not a fully rational thing, and it has very little to do with the more practical aspects of architecture. It does not feed people, it does not fix what is broken, it is not necessary in the sense that shelter is necessary.

The time and place of design formulation and direct experience contribute to this intangible dimension of design - to the experiential outcome. Young (2010) points to the memorial as a reflection of “both its socio-historical and aesthetic contexts: artists working in eras of cubism, expressionism, socialist realism, earthworks, minimalism, and conceptual art.” Maya Lin’s modern minimalist design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a clear response to controversy over the Vietnam War. Nearly three decades later, the 9/11 memorial borrows much of this same language of black, reflective marble, engraved names, and geometric form to memorialize a very different kind of event.

2 Competitions and Context

Introduction

As memorials of controversial, destructive events in American history, the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials were conceived only after long processes of debate, compromise and persuasion. The emergent context of each design's development and creation is a statement about the historical moment and event being commemorated, as well as the influential qualities of the memorial experience itself.

About the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Competition

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed by then twenty-year-old, Maya Lin, has been the subject of a wealth of criticism since a panel of judges found it more fitting than 1,440 other entries in the 1981 design competition. The objective of this competition was to find a design that commemorated the war, but did not make a political statement about its correctness. Due to the nature of the war in Vietnam, and the lack of consensus about whether it should be fought, this design competition was destined for controversy. A mere six years after the war ended, a jury of designers – not Vietnam veterans – found the entry of an Asian-American female undergraduate student at Yale University, to be the most successful in honoring those lives lost in Vietnam.

Endowment for the memorial came from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which was created by Jan Scruggs. The hope was to create a place that would give long overdue recognition and thanks to those who served in the horrific and controversial war in Vietnam (Langmead, 2009). Scruggs obtained the prime location on the Washington Mall, raised funds for the memorial, and asked architect Paul Speiregen to advise the competition (Langmead, 2009). A jury of artists was formed, including Pietro Bulluschi, Harry Weese, James Rosati, Constantino Nivola, Richard H. Hunt, Hideo Sasaki, Garrett Eckbo, and chairman Grady Clay. The competition was then opened to any US citizen over 17 years old, with an award of \$20,000 for the winning entry. After 1,421 entries were submitted, the jury began the long decision process on Monday, April 27, 1981. Maya Lin's simple submission of two chalk drawings and an accompanying hand-written narrative drew the attention of the judges, winning the competition and simultaneously stirring up controversy among Vietnam veterans. After a long process of negotiation and compromise, the design was approved on March 11th, 1982 (Langmead, 2009).



Figure 1: Maya Lin Original Submission for Vietnam Veterans Memorial Competition

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Context

Shortly after the winning design was announced, numerous Vietnam veterans voiced their discontent with the minimalist, untraditional design that was chosen, believing that it lacked the heroism and pride that they felt were so integral to their Vietnam experience. One of the most vocal, Tom Carhart, wrote an article called *Insulting Vietnam Vets* for the New York Times, in which he laments what he believes to be the “anti-heroic” message of the wall: “By this will we be remembered: a black gash of shame and sorrow, hacked into the national visage that is the Mall” (1981). Comparing the “real war in Vietnam” to the “political war waged here at home,” Carhart expresses the need for those who have experienced the real war to be involved in the memorial design process. He continues, “The issue is not one of art: If Americans allow that black trench to be dug, future generations will understand clearly what America thought of its Vietnam veterans... Why can’t we have something white and traditional and above ground?” (Carhart, 1981). Because Lin’s design did not fit his image of what a war memorial should look like, Carhart altogether dismissed it.

Vastly different from any other war memorial built before its time, Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial defined a new image for what a war memorial could be. Some critics saw this bold diversion from the norm as discouraging, seeing the VVM as “a funerary monument, a grave marker buried in the mall amongst all the bright shrines to principle and promise” (Marling & Silberman, 1987). Many other critics, however, saw Lin’s work as monumental – the dawn of a new era in memorial design. In *Outside In: Maya Lin’s Systematic Landscapes*, Richard Andrews (2006) asserts: “this single work changed the course of American monument design by fusing the cool visual language of Modernism with the heat of memory and tragic loss.” Despite its bold, hardened materiality and “formal symmetry,” Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) typify the Vietnam Veterans Memorial not as a modernist work, but as a post-modern memorial prototype. Seeing it as a member of this category helps to “identify and explain the memorial’s political rhetoric... The goal is not to locate the message, but the multiple, frequently conflicting, messages. To attempt a unified, centered reading, thus, is to miss the point” (Blair et al. 1991). To see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a member of this post-modern category is to view it as a discussion – a political conversation more about the meaning within the architecture than its minimalist appearance. Kieran Long, in *The Monument in the Age of Political Correctness*, does not see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a subversive conversation, or at least, not a true enough conversation, asserting that this minimalist approach is due to an unwillingness to take a controversial position. He writes: “Minimalism has come to be the language of universalism, which is deemed appropriate for monuments now that societies are afraid of being seen as exclusive” (Long, 2008). Many argue, however, that the brilliance of this new genre of memorial is its openness to individual interpretation and lack of direct reference to the

war itself, which together have a unifying effect on those who visit what has now become known as 'the wall'. "Overwhelmingly, the characteristic response of pilgrims to the wall is silence. The silence speaks, not of the desire to scapegoat, or the lack of desire, but of the desire not to violate, and of the desire that flows from reverence for all of life – even the lives of the dead" (Pahl, 1995).

Langmead (2009) describes the physical form of the memorial itself:

Each wing of the two wings of the memorial, known as The Wall, is a little under 247 feet long and comprises seventy-two separate panels of black granite... The wings meet at an angle of 125 degrees; at the apex they are just over 10 feet high. They point to the north-east corners of the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial respectively. The tallest panels have 137 lines of names; the shortest, at the ends of the wings, are blank. There is an average of five names per line, inscribed in upper-case letters a little over a half inch high in Optima typeface; a symbol associated with each name indicated whether the person's death was confirmed, or he or she was missing at the end of the war.

Such a dark, underground form was up to this point unheard of in memorial design. In *The Wall, the Screen and the Image*, Marita Sturken writes, "In rejecting the architectural lineage of monuments and contesting the aesthetic codes of previous war memorials, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial also refuses the closure and implied tradition of those structures; yet it both condemns and justifies future memorials" (Sturken, 1991). Due to the conflict between those who supported Lin's design, and those who, like Carhart, viewed it as "anti-war," two other elements were added to Lin's wall as a compromise to accommodate multiple viewpoints. These two elements, the Three Soldiers statue and the Vietnam Women's Memorial, are arguably two members of this traditional class that Lin, in her design, was attempting to deviate from. In *The Names of the Dead*, Robert Harrison (1997) asserts that the Three Soldiers statue is "evidence of just how pathetic a conventional symbolism appears in this context." This assertion points to the need for an entirely new class of memorial, given the unique conditions of this work. Lin herself saw this need, and fought against the addition of these traditional elements: "These intrusions... reflect an insensitivity to the original design's subtle spatial eloquence," she states (Mock, 1994). The mere existence of these three vastly different memorial elements offers insight into this battle for a universally pleasing memorial. Blair et al explain: "to treat [the elements of the memorial] as separable is to neglect the Memorial's character as culturally constituted and to overlook its nature as itself a political compromise" (1991). Yet, this compromise is not one that has created a single, unified monument, but instead, a fragmented, conflicting attempt at blurring two classes of entirely different memorializing: "To contemplate one, a visitor must turn his/her back on the other" (Blair et al., 1991).

The construction of The Wall had a special impact on those who fought in the Vietnam war, about one third of whom returned home with post traumatic stress disorder (Langmead, 2009). Jeffrey Karl Ochsner (1997) writes:

The war in Vietnam divided American society, and those divisions remained even when the war came to an end. Given the mixed feelings of Americans about the war, and the pain these engendered, the most common response was, in effect, denial. Many found it difficult to talk about the war. Veterans returned home with little fanfare, and there was initially little recognition of their sacrifices; they were even reviled. The dead, when their bodies could be recovered, were buried quietly and mourned privately. The acceptance of even the facts of the war, whatever one believed about them, was missing. However, the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, with the inscribed names of the dead and missing, seemed to change all this. Creating this public record of the names meant that they were inscribed in the 'text of symbolic tradition.' This symbolization meant that these individuals and their sacrifices would not be forgotten; no longer denied, they would become part of the nation's memory.

Marita Sturken (1991) redefines the idea of The Wall as a home - a place of belonging for veterans:

The memorial has given them a place - one that recognizes their identities, a place at which to congregate and from which to speak. Hence, the memorial is as much about survival as it is about mourning the dead. The construction of an identity for the veterans since their return from the war has become the most present and continuing narrative of the memorial.

Over time, the memorial has evolved in meaning for its visitors. The divergence from tradition that once provoked tremendous backlash, is what today has earned The Wall its greatest level of respect. Widely acknowledged as a powerful statement of loss, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is currently visited by over 4.5 million people each year (Langmead, 2009).

Designer Interpretation

Using a poetic verbal essay rather than representational images, Lin created a dialogue for her work from the very beginning. Her submittal for the 1981 design competition (see Figure 1) explained her design as an experiential narrative:

Walking into the grassy site contained by the walls of this memorial we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole. For this memorial is meant not as a monument to the individual, but rather as a memorial to the men and women who died during this war, as a whole.

Lin (2000) then goes on to explain the exact behavior of the wall itself, and the way the chronological list of names follows the wall in a cyclical way – beginning in the middle of the wall, receding into the earth to the right, and emerging from the earth with the other side of the wall to the left.

Thus the war's beginning and end meet; the war is 'complete,' coming full circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side, and contained within the earth itself. As we turn to leave, we see these walls stretching into the distance, directing us to the Washington Monument to the left and the Lincoln Memorial to the right, thus bringing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial into historical context. We, the living are brought to a concrete realization of these deaths.

To one who looks only at the simple chalk drawings that accompany this essay, Lin's design may well be likened to "a black gash of shame and sorrow," as Carhart described (1981). The issue, for Lin, was relaying this careful narrative to a public that seemed overly compelled by her abstract images, which led them to jump to conclusions about the nature of her design. Knowing that her sketches were "deceptively simple," Lin (2000) explains, "the description was critical to understanding the design since the memorial worked more on an emotional level than a formal one." Lin points to the specific reasons, she believes, that the design was misinterpreted: "The misreading of the design as a negative political statement that in some way was meant to reflect upon the service of the veterans was in part fueled by a cultural prejudice against the color black as well as by the misreading or misinformation that led some veterans to imagine the design as a ditch or a hole" (2000). As a young, Asian-American member of the Ivy League, Lin was also criticized for her lack of knowledge and understanding about the war. In her 2000 book *Boundaries*, Lin responds: "I made a conscious decision not to do any specific research on the Vietnam War and the political turmoil surrounding it... I wanted to create a memorial that everyone would be able to respond to, regardless of whether one thought our country should or should not have participated in the war." Written in the fall of 1982, Lin was so hesitant to make this response to the public that she saved it for the publication of her book 18 years later. "I was very careful not to discuss my beliefs in terms of politics," she explains (2000). Maintaining that this political knowledge was beside the point, Lin claims, "It's really the people, not the politics, which is what this piece is about" (Mock, 1994). She explains that her memorial is about "honesty," and that the reasoning for the list of names comes from a need for people to accept the cost of the war in order to rise above the pain. "You have to accept and admit that the pain has occurred in order for it to be healed, in order for it to be cathartic" (Mock, 1994). Despite much criticism that sees Lin's design as a political statement, she maintains that, "it is not a memorial to the politics of war or controversy, but to all those men and women who served. It weaves the individual with the freedom and reflection of contemplation" (Mock, 1994). Lin deliberately uses the physical site conditions to encourage meaningful connections, thoughts and emotions. In Frieda Lee Mock's documentary film (1994) entitled *A Strong Clear Vision*, Lin speaks about how her work "originates from a simple desire to make people aware of their surroundings, and this can include not just the physical, but the psychological world that we live in." Lin later describes her ultimate intention with her work as a whole: "I seek to create an intimate dialogue with the viewer, to allow a place of contemplation, sometimes an incorporation of history, always a reliance on time, memory, or a passage or journey" (2000).

About the 9/11 Memorial

Memorial Competition

After the devastation of 9/11, New York City was left with a complicated and difficult question of what to do with what had become known as the “Ground Zero” site. In *A New Deal for New York*, Mike Wallace (2002) writes,

Some victims’ families had wanted to halt the cleanup process and leave the site as a suppurating sore, but that approach was overruled. Others, including Mayor Giuliani, urged making the entire sixteen-acre area a commerce-free zone, a not-for-profit parkland of sacred space. Others have proposed Eiffel-like towers, monumental statuary, a roll-call of the fallen.

One of the main questions was how to divide the functions of the site; what would memorialize the tragedy and what would contribute to the everyday life of New Yorkers? A great deal of controversy centered on this topic of what the site should be – whether it should have retail, whether it should live through night and day as a part of the rest of the city, or whether it should “remain always a shrine to the departed” (Simpson, 2006).

Immediately following 9/11, lists of names were displayed publicly as a means of locating those who were missing, in a way, becoming their own temporary memorials (Spector, 2008). The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation offered six conceptual building and site plans in July of 2002, which were highly criticized, pushing the LMDC to solicit proposals in an international design competition. There were over 400 entries in this competition, with Daniel Libeskind’s design of the Freedom Tower and surrounding buildings as the winner. (Langmead, 2009). In April of 2003, a second competition for a 9/11 memorial began, drawing 5,200 entries from 63 countries, and making it the “largest architectural contest in history” (Goldberger, 2004). The guidelines of the competition stated that the memorial should: “recognize each individual who was a victim of the attacks,” “provide space for contemplation,” and “make visible the footprints of the original world trade center towers.” In his book *Up From Zero: politics, architecture, and the rebuilding of New York*, Paul Goldberger (2004) writes of his disappointment with the selection of entries:

Almost all of the schemes seemed to have a somewhat generic quality, as if they were more concerned with encouraging feelings of warmth rather than emotions more directly connected to the trade-center tragedy... Curiously, none of the schemes chosen preserved the twisted and burned shards of steel from the façade of the twin towers, which are powerful almost beyond words. The remnants of steel had always seemed like the ideal focus of a memorial since they are both startlingly graphic and utterly specific, but it seemed as if they were too painful and too much of this place alone. Instead, most of the designers opted for schemes that would commemorate any sadness, not the particular horror of the World Trade Center events, and most of the finalists’ projects had the bland earnestness of a well-designed public plaza.

He further suggests that the memorial design process was rushed to accommodate the desires of the victim’s families, and in doing so, overlooked the memorial’s significance for future generations who

have no direct memory of the Twin Towers' collapse. "The rush to move quickly at Ground Zero forced a different and much more short-term set of priorities on the planning process," Goldberger (2004) writes, comparing the process to that of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial competition.

The competition jury was comprised of two politicians, one family member of a victim, and numerous respected artists, architects and academics. According to Goldberger (2004), Maya Lin, one of these jurors, "believed that there was only one finalist strong enough to be chosen, Michael Arad." Because many of the finalist designs had no landscape component, the jury advised them to alter their designs. Goldberger writes, "The jury understood that austerity was fundamental to Arad's design," so they convinced him to pair with Peter Walker, who is "known for his minimalist designs" and "he quickly set about adding trees to Arad's design." The footprints in Arad's design were slightly smaller and not on the exact locations of the towers, but because the family members of victims had clearly articulated that nothing should be built in these sacred spots, the committee had to adjust the design to fit exactly over the tower footprints (Goldberger, 2004). Yamasaki, the designer of the original twin towers, intentionally aligned his buildings with the Manhattan street grid, thus to build around these footprints requires a departure from the guiding grid system of the city (Goldberger, 2004).

On January 13 of 2004, Michael Arad and Peter Walker were announced winners, yet their design was later changed, "allegedly in response to security and economic constraints" (Langmead, 2009). The many constraints and opinions contributing to the memorial's final design resulted in alterations and compromises, ultimately costing about \$1 billion to construct (Langmead, 2009).



Figure 2: Michael Arad Original Submission for 9/11 Memorial Competition

9/11 Memorial Context

The events of 9/11 have set up an extremely unique and charged condition for remembering. In *Icons of American Architecture: From the Alamo to the World Trade Center*, Donald Langmead (2009) describes the attacks: “On the morning of September 11, 2001, four teams of terrorists, each including at least one trained pilot, hijacked four commercial passenger jets en route to California from Dulles International, Logan International, and Newark airport.” American Airlines Flight 11 hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center, United Airlines flight 175 hit the South Tower, American Airlines Flight 77 hit the Pentagon, and Flight 93 failed in its attempt to reach the capitol because of the efforts of the passengers and crew, instead landing in a field in Pennsylvania. These events took the lives of 2,603 people in NYC alone, and approximately 2,800 lives were lost overall. David Simpson (2006) describes this unanticipated disaster as “an unforeseen eruption across the path of a history.”

Because the 9/11 event occurred exactly where it is being commemorated, and because the site happens to be the center of a dense, urban neighborhood, a challenge arises that memorials seldom encounter. Paul Goldberger (2004) compares the site to Gettysburg:

The center of New York's financial district is hardly a rural battlefield or the relatively sparsely populated center of Oklahoma City. Density was its hallmark, and as people believed that Ground Zero was sacred, they also began to accept the notion that, paradoxically, its sacred nature might be best expressed by celebrating the joy and the potential of everyday urban life. That is the real design dilemma, and the one for which no other memorial prepares us: the extent to which it is impossible, conceptually, to fully separate the symbolic memorial from everything else that would be done on these sixteen acres.

This challenge was evident from the beginning, as sellers took advantage of the crowds of people coming to see the sights of Ground Zero by locating their street business adjacent to the site (Langmead, 2009). Significance is also added to the siting of this memorial because it is both a memorial and a literal grave site where many perished on September 11th, and unidentified cremated remains have been preserved, waiting for an age when technology will allow us to identify their DNA (Simpson, 2006).

Another contextual challenge for memorialization is the fear that the events of 9/11 produced. “The terrorist attacks changed the popular perception of the WTC from triumph to tragedy,” writes Langmead (2009). David Simpson (2006) cites Jean Beaudrillard’s idea that the “Twin Towers” were symbols of an “information culture,” in which duplication and replication are central, thus the idea of terrorism in future places and times becomes replicated; a constant threat. Simpson points out the danger of dividing into cultural categories of “us” vs. “them” - seeing the “other” as the terrorists, and unfortunately by

association, people from that same part of the world (Simpson 2006). He encourages us to consider the importance of terminology and naming in how we perceive. The name of the event lends itself to this constant fear, as it is not a place, or moment in history, but a recurring time in the year – “It will repeat itself every year, and it will remain an open designation, a communications channel for crisis, an emergency number” (Simpson, 2006). The terminology of the site as a whole suggests a shift in culture – from the ‘freedom tower,’ to the ‘heroes of 9/11,’ to ‘ground zero.’ Simpson writes, “The seemingly now-accepted hyperbole of the Freedom Tower looks set to coexist with the starker subterranean environment of the memorial in a juxtaposition that registers a more general uncertainty about what 9/11 means and for whom it means.”

Designer Interpretation

Michael Arad, a young and previously unknown architect working in New York City, conceived of his idea for the memorial long before the competition was announced. “That attack really changed my relationship to the city – my understanding of the place... we were all connected by what happened,” he explained during a lecture at Cornell University in April, 2012. Shortly after the attacks in 2001, he had the vision for “a pair of voids – twin voids carved into the surface of the Hudson River,” he elaborated in a telephone interview with the author. This sketch was “made as a form of cathartic self-expression,” not with the intention of winning a competition. He spent about a year attempting to understand what this image would be, and in doing so, took a model he made up to a rooftop in order to see the “absence of the towers in the skyline manifested through reflection” (Arad, 2012 a).

He then set his idea aside, coming back to it a year later. Seeing Daniel Libeskind’s proposal for the memorial site, Arad strongly disagreed that this was the right decision for that space, and identified elements of Libeskind’s scheme that were working in contrast to integration of the memorial with the urban fabric of New York City. He saw the change in grade as an obvious problem, as it created this separation; “sheltering the site... would do a huge disservice to the city,” explained Arad (2012 a). He mentioned his own emotional experience of the attacks as someone living in New York City, and who at that point realized the fundamental need for public space.

When he began thinking about his submission for the memorial competition in 2003, he worked with how to integrate these two ideas. He hoped to create a memorial space that would also continue to function as an asset for the community; “I firmly believe that these two things are not in contradiction to one another,” he states (Arad, 2012 a).

Arad’s design appears to be a simple plaza with two memorial pools, each with a seemingly infinite

waterfall into the center, in the footprints where the Twin Towers once stood. “You can see in your mind’s eye where the towers were... it’s not as if we’re erasing the memory – we’re asking you to see them in a new way,” says Arad (2012 b). His goal was to create a “quiet, solemn, spiritual place,” using the sound of the two pools as an “acoustical enclosure.” Over time, the requests of the jury for greater attention to landscape, the requests of family members of victims for a meaningful arrangement of the engraved names, and the constraints of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation all influenced the design’s evolution and development. “I think the design greatly improved as a result of these constraints placed upon us,” Arad reflected later (2012, b).

The arrangement of the names of those who were lost in the events of September 11th provided one of the most challenging questions of all, and was an extremely important element of the design to the family members of victims. “I struggled with the question of the approach that didn’t create hierarchy,” recalls Arad. After many different ideas were proposed and challenged, he developed the idea of “meaningful adjacencies,” in which names were placed next to one another based on location of death as well as personal connections with others. This entailed reaching out to approximately 3000 families for any requests of names they wished to see adjacent to their loved one on the memorial. This time consuming effort to honor the wishes of thousands informed the “incredibly complex hidden logic” of a memorial that seems, from the exterior, to be incredibly simple (Arad, 2012 b).

Arad is optimistic that his design will be successful in its goal of integrating into New York’s urban fabric. He says, “we set the stage, but it really is about people being on the site” – “with their emotions and that sense of community” (2012, b) Ultimately, he describes his work in relation to the resonant noise of the surrounding city; Arad claims the memorial is “the built equivalent of a moment of silence.”

3 On-site Experience

Introduction

One cannot truly know a place without going there - being a part of it, sensing and interacting as a means of understanding. On-site experience at both the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials provided the means for seeking greater understanding of both the author's and other visitors' personal perceptions and behaviors taking place there. By observing, annotating and representing patterns of visitor experience relating to the conditions of the person, place and time of their visit, knowledge of how each memorial impacts and influences its users is revealed. Findings from this research form the basis of suggested principles or guidelines for the design of future memorials. Such guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to provoke thought, facilitate interaction with memory, and promote powerful, underdetermined experiences unique to each visitor.

Research Methods

Several different methods were used to collect this experiential data, including a record of personal experience, observations, photography, and interviews. Some methods proved more useful than others, with the most valuable information coming from those methods involving the greatest amount of interaction - face-to-face interviews. Photography, arguably the method involving the least interaction, turned out to be quite a disappointment.

An on-site information collection schedule was created that involved three-hour-long cycles of observation, interviews, timed photography, each method deserving one hour of attention per cycle. This strategy disintegrated within moments of the first visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day Weekend 2011. It became immediately apparent that the information to be obtained through interviews far exceeded the superficial scans and observations made with timed photography, and that photography was further complicated by difficulty finding a vantage point from which to photograph the entire site at once. On the first research day, many visitors agreed to talk about their experience, and the interviews proved far less intrusive and disruptive than originally anticipated. Requiring a great deal of time and sensitivity, more attention was therefore given to interviewing than any other method. Observations also proved quite informative, as they provided an idea of what behaviors were common or uncommon in certain locations on site - something that interviews alone would have failed to convey. Keeping a careful self-record of personal observations and experiences helped to increase awareness of how others were behaving at the site.

Reflection on Personal Experience

Recording of the author's personal experience at each memorial occurred during two scheduled visits to each site: Saturday, November 12th and Friday, March 9th to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and Saturday, February 25 and Sunday, February 26th to the 9/11 Memorial. During these visits, the author used photo and narrative essays to record her experiences and also to convey what it would feel like to be a first-time visitor.

At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

I walked into the National Mall just north of the Lincoln Memorial. From there, making my way across the grass, I could not see The Wall itself - only a park-like setting between the trees. I followed two older men who appeared to be Vietnam veterans, until I saw the wall open on my left, a crowd of people gathered all along its black reflective surface. As I descended, I could feel the wall rising, towering over me, and eventually consuming me. It felt heavy, sunken, overwhelming, the names seeming incomprehensible in number. At the apex, I was in a different place - completely separated from the sounds and sights of the rest of the mall. As I ascended, with the Washington Monument in the distance, I looked around for a place to take timed photos of the site.

As I did this, a volunteer in a yellow hat approached me asking if he could help. I had been hesitant to approach people for interviews for fear of interrupting their moment with the wall, and I saw this as an opportunity to begin with someone who was clearly willing to talk to me. I quickly collected my thoughts, introduced myself, and asked what brought him to the wall. He immediately pointed to a single name behind me on the wall, saying, as his eyes teared, "This name. This is why I'm here." One day during their service in Vietnam, this individual – one of the wall's 58,272 – offered to take his post, the same day stepping on the land mine that ended his life. Even now, he said, he can't stop thinking that name should have been his own. Within twenty minutes of my arrival at the wall, I was standing, fully in tears, embraced by a Vietnam Veteran – a stranger in a yellow hat who was kind enough to share with me his memory. In that moment I understood. Completely unanticipated, this powerful experience now defines the memorial in my mind.



SCHUH • MICHAEL SEARS • JOSEPH
 SHANK • ARTHUR D SHELTON • C
 CKLAND Jr • STANLEY G STRONG
 ARL B TERHUNE Jr • WILLIAM L T
 Y VOGEL • HOWARD B WALDRON
 HITE • GREGORY K WHITEHOUSE •
 WILLIAMS • STEPHEN F WOODS •
 KER • HAROLD G BEANE Jr • RALPH
 N BRITTON • GERALD K BROWN •
 CONSAVAGE • LESLIE COOK • EDW
 LEATE • THOMAS W FERGUSON •



Figure 3: Personal Experience Photographic Narrative Vietnam Veterans Memorial

At the 9/11 Memorial

My experience of the 9/11 memorial began in Ithaca, NY before leaving for my weekend trip to Manhattan. On the memorial's website [<http://www.911memorial.org/visitor-passes>], I reserved free passes to the memorial for myself and my house mate, Gretchen. Accidentally leaving these in Ithaca, I printed them yet again at a friend's house in Lower Manhattan before taking the subway to the memorial late on a Saturday morning. We emerged from the subway, and uncertain of where to go, we began to walk in search of signs. Eventually, we found guidance in the form of a bright blue banner along a chain link fence, directing 9/11 memorial visitors to the left. Following the signs, we found ourselves just adjacent the subway stop once again, and continued on, following the crowds and blue signage. After crossing the street, turning right and then left, we arrived at what was obviously the entrance to the memorial: a long, winding line of visitors, interspersed with security personnel. With some time to spare before our timed 12:00 entry, we stopped at a local store to buy food before returning to wait in the lines.

As we waited, the sudden shock of a loud air horn blast frightened the crowd, followed by "it's nothing to be alarmed about!" from a security guard. Murmurs from the crowd conveyed a general sense of unease, with an audible "did that scare you?" from a nearby group of young adults. Meanwhile, my friend Gretchen and I dictated our thoughts to a hand-held audio recorder. "We've just been zigzagging back and forth to get in, and people are pretty cold, but generally pretty calm about it," I explained. Again, the security guard called out, "Keep it movin! Fast fast fast!" Despite the waiting and repeated checking of visitors passes, the general mood throughout was one of contentment and complacency. After weaving through multiple lines, we were led around the corner of the World Center Hotel, and into the ground floor to be checked by security. We were directed into different lines, much resembling airport security stations, emptied our pockets, removed our belts, and sent our purses through the x-ray machines. Both Gretchen and I set off the security detector as we walked through the x-ray machine, so our boots were investigated more closely, and after going through again, we were allowed to gather our things and head for the exit. Unable to record or photograph there, I recalled the experience once we arrived at the memorial: "As we were hurriedly packing up, it felt really frantic in there to me - nerve-racking and frantic." We were funneled between the exterior of the building and a chain link fence to the sound track of, "Visitors passes! Have your visitors passes out!" In total, our passes were checked about five times, marked once, and we were never asked for proof of our identity. At 12:32, we passed through the final threshold, arriving at the expansive memorial plaza within the construction of lower manhattan. After a half hour of build-up, arrival at the memorial came as somewhat of a surprise.

Along with the rest of the crowd, we walked straight toward the southwest corner of the south pool. As we got closer and closer, I began to realize the scale of the space and the immense size of each

pool. Remembering that each pool sits in the footprint of a tower that once was there, I immediately felt compelled to look up, to try to understand what was once there. I asked Gretchen what she was feeling, and she responded, "It makes me picture where the building was - what it used to be. It does make me think of it falling – like a really strong image in your mind."

Right in the wind tunnel of lower manhattan, the memorial is an exposed windscape, with no real place for shelter at this point in its construction. I stood there in the windy cold with Gretchen, watching leaves flying into the air and trying to figure out how I felt and what I thought. Coming to the memorial for the first time with the knowledge of the memorial's history, an understanding of the design, and the opinions of so many writers before me, I found it difficult to separate myself - to see it with my own eyes, and experience the place with my senses. I began to dissect it aloud to her: "One thing that struck me is the scale. It's so huge, and people are so far apart. When I was standing there and looking across the pool – there are so many specs on the far side of the pool and the water is so loud and the surrounding city is so loud... I can't help but contrast it to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial which is a space entirely it's own, and even in terms of sound, it's different from the rest of the park, the mall. The sound and the scale make it less intimate to me; not necessarily less powerful, just less intimate." Gretchen agreed, "It's really hard to separate this place from its surroundings." We listened to the noises of the construction just beyond the chain link fence, along with the sounds of water falling deep into the south pool.

"The whole security thing that we had to go through is kind of out of the mind – it was really nerve-racking and hectic at that point, but it's a lot calmer in here," Gretchen observed. We walked slowly around the south pool, and across to the north pool. Because of the wind, the north pool had been turned off. It sat there - quiet and still - a deep, smooth, stone foundation in the earth waiting for a building to be constructed above. To me, this sublime image was more powerful than the previous pool. It provided a more confrontational reminder that a building used to exist there. As we walked clockwise around this pool, Gretchen told me that she felt compelled to work her way around the entirety of each pool - that she felt a personal need to give each and every name attention. No name would go unnoticed. "I think it's interesting how the names are so diverse," she said. "If this had happened in any other part of the country – like say, Minnesota – it would all be Peters and Andersons, but New York being the Metropolis it is, it's people with all different backgrounds, races..." The variety of visitors around us re-articulated the universality of this memorial and the wide range people affected by the event itself. Although the media reaction to the event of 9/11 has conjured a fear of "the other," reality seems to contradict such a reaction. The number of languages I heard spoken throughout the day impressed more and more in my mind that this is not a memorial for America or Americans, but for all the people of the world. And if this is the case, the only "other" we really have to fear is the media.

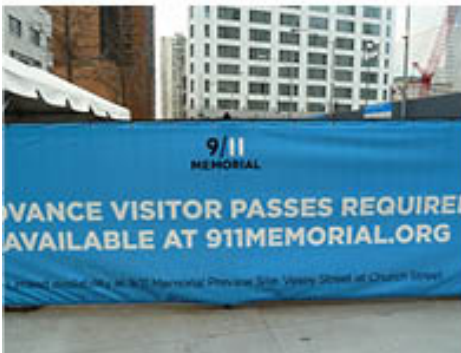
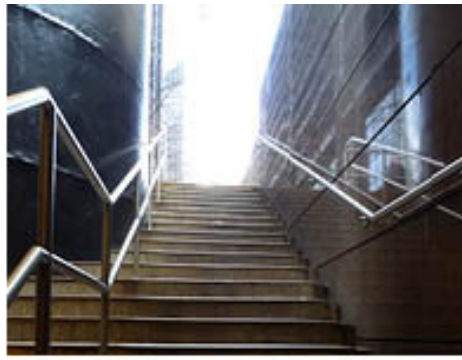


Figure 4: Personal Experience Photographic Narrative 9/11 Memorial

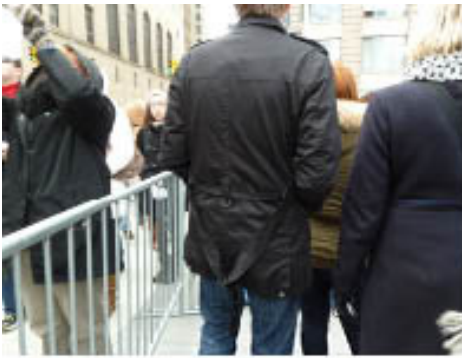


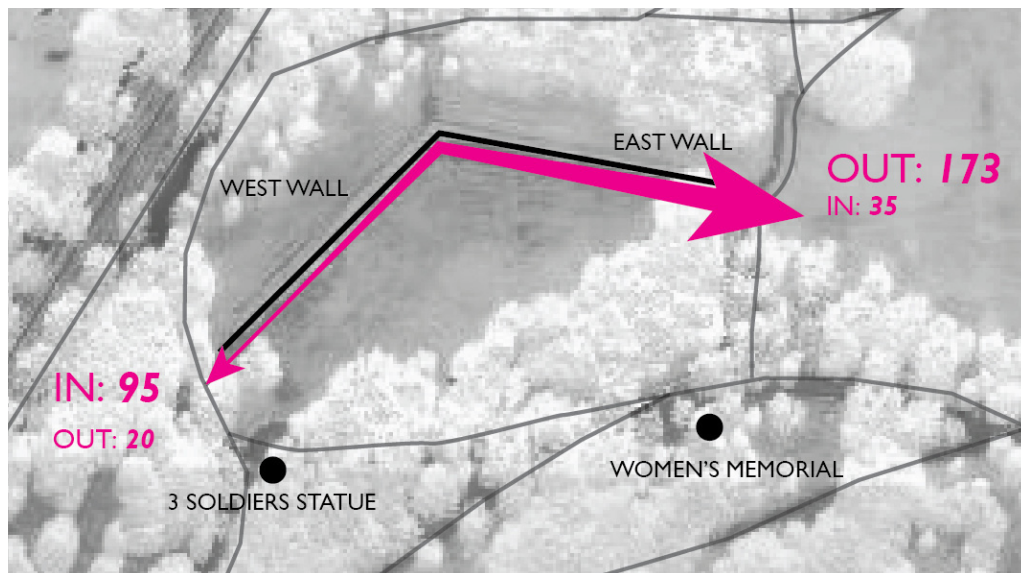


Figure 5: Personal Experience Photographic Narrative 9/11 Memorial cont.

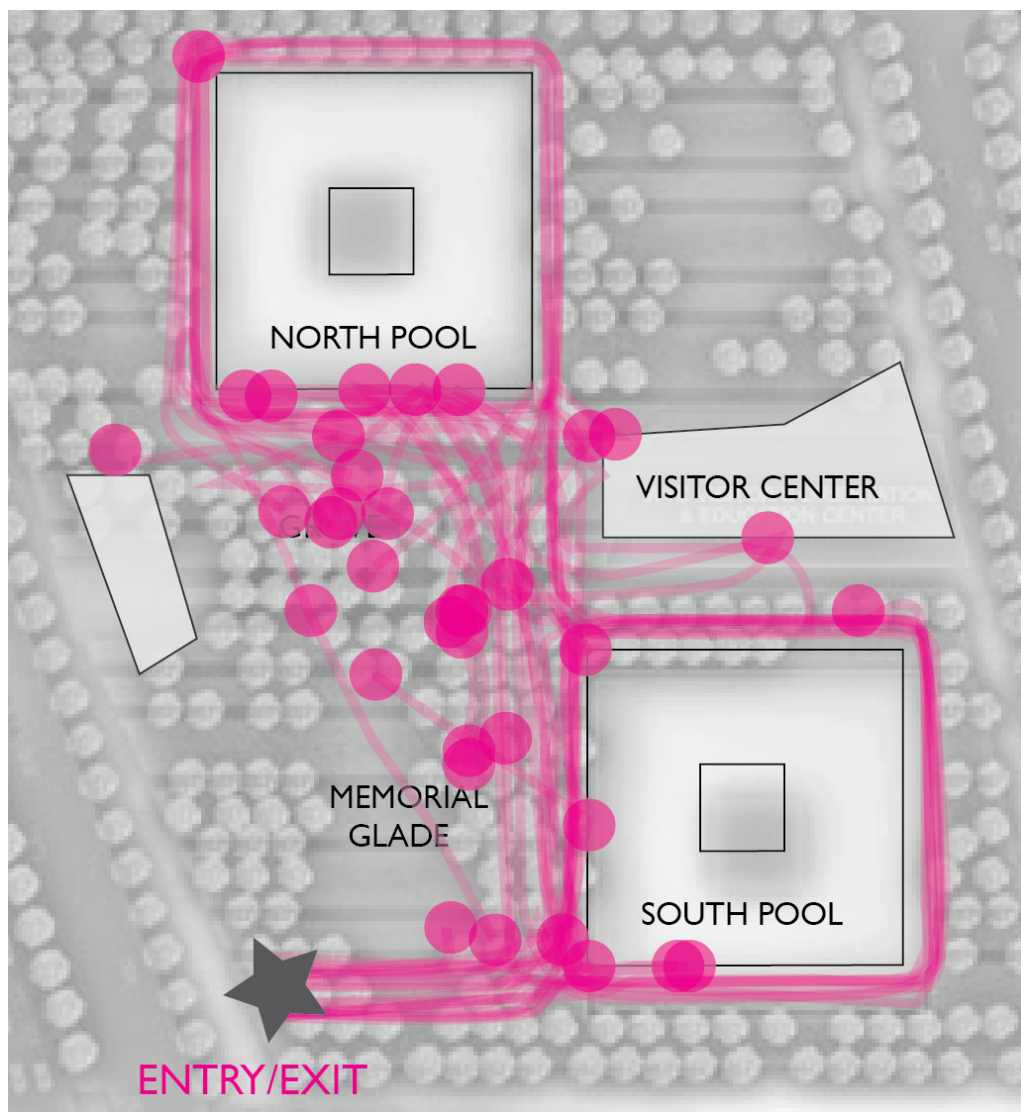
Collected Information

Observations

Observations were extremely valuable in identifying behaviors present at each memorial. I found it difficult to determine exactly how to record observed behaviors, and what different methods of recording might suggest. I struggled with how to measure behavior in a way that was not simply a quantitative description of *how many* times I observed a behavior. While one visitor could touch the wall five times, another could establish a deeply emotional connection touching the wall only once. What would a quantitative measurement like this suggest? In an effort to primarily compare across memorials rather than across visitors, I tried to note wider trends that I saw throughout the entire duration of my visit. I noted locations where certain behaviors were present or absent, and used these to delineate zones of behavior at each site.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial



9/11 Memorial

Figure 6: Movement Patterns of Memorial Visitors



**MEMORIAL
ENTRANCE**

INDOOR SECURITY CHECKPOINT

Figure 7: Getting to the 9/11 Memorial





Figure 8: Prevalent Behaviors at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, certain behaviors were extremely common: touching the wall, walking slowly, reading the names, taking photographs and talking quietly. Volunteers on site helped visitors understand the design of The Wall, organization of the names, and significance of the reflective surface. These volunteers are prepared with rubbing paper, pencils, and ladders to assist visitors in taking rubbings of names on the wall. They are extremely kind, knowledgeable and respectful, contributing to the overall atmosphere of togetherness and sensitivity at the memorial.

Objects left at the memorial - from uniforms to letters to wine bottles - provide reason for visitors to interact closely - to kneel down, and connect with a memory that someone living was kind enough to share. Because people are not allowed on the grass surrounding The Wall, all of these behaviors occur within the single v-shaped pathway. On the exterior paths, benches face away from the memorial, further accentuating this separation; either one interacts intimately with the memorial, or one is removed from it - there is no in-between.



Figure 9: Prevalent Behaviors at the 9/11 Memorial

Common behaviors observed here included: photographing (both the memorial alone as well as people with the memorial), touching names, walking and talking, calling or texting, huddling in stationary groups, and standing silently while looking into the pools. Slower movement and less talking was observed alongside the pools, while faster and louder behaviors centered around the central plaza space. Likely resulting from the sound and vast scale of the memorial, loud talking, quick movements, and cell phone use are widespread behaviors, uncommonly found in other grieving spaces.

The large block stone benches provide seating throughout the plaza on which visitors sit alone, sit with friends, sit and talk on the phone, stand on to take pictures, or even lie down and close their eyes. Although these were designed to be relaxing places to sit, on a cold, windy February day, there is currently nowhere in the memorial space to escape the elements and relax. With young, sparse trees and an unfinished Visitor Center, people crowd together in search of a calmer environment. In a wind tunnel of southern Manhattan, the site is harshly exposed to wind, cold, sun, and noise.

Photography

Due to the surroundings of both sites, timed photography of each memorial was less informative than desired. Not allowed to walk on the grass surrounding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I had difficulty trying to capture the entire site through the trees. At one point I walked on the grass, and within two minutes, an employee had come after me to gently notify me that I was not allowed to be there. At the 9/11 memorial, a massive red crane obstructed a distant birds-eye view of the site. Looking at these photos afterward, I had trouble discerning patterns due to the distance of people and the crane blocking the area of the site with the highest traffic flow. Figure 12 on the next page displays this difficulty.



Figure 10: 9/11 Memorial from the World Terrace Club, 20th Floor Restaurant of the World Center Hotel



Figure 11: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Through the Trees

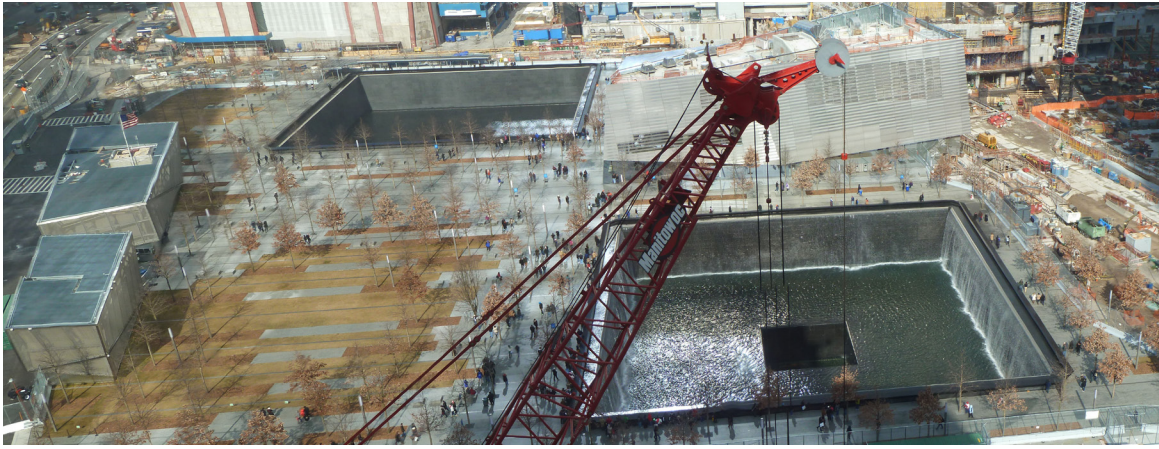


Figure 12: Timed Photography at the 9/11 Memorial



Figure 13: Timed Photography at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial



Attempts at timed photography at the Vietnam Veterans memorial required experimentation with different vantage points. This set of photos aims to capture the entire memorial from the East over a half hour period.

4 Interviews & Interaction

Introduction

As this research endeavor is fundamentally about the unique experience of each individual, I made some of my most relevant, exciting and informative discoveries through discussion with others. I not only interviewed visitors while on-site at the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans memorials, but I also interviewed individuals with special knowledge of each place, including the Chief of Staff and the designer of the 9/11 memorial.

At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

From conversation with visitors to the memorial, I found a striking contrast in emotional responses. On Veteran's Day Weekend 2011, this memorial was bustling with visitors - from families with strollers to couples on bikes to groups of returning Vietnam veterans - and despite the crowd, each individual seemed acutely conscious of the charged space they were entering. Respect, remembrance, and a sense of overwhelming togetherness were in the air. That day, I listened to numerous sobbing stories of lives lost, saw teary-eyed strangers embrace, and felt a sharp sensation of empathy each time a stranger stopped to touch a single name. Not a single person that day declined to be interviewed.

Returning again to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in March 2012, I encountered an entirely different emotional space. As I intercepted visitors upon exiting the memorial, they seemed disengaged, unaware, unshaken. The purpose of their visit that day was not to remember, to be confronted with



Figure 14: Interviewing at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

this historical loss; it was simply to have a nice walk in the park - to experience Washington DC on a beautiful spring day. This extreme contrast reinforced to me the importance of context in evaluating responses to design. The same visitor on each of these occasions could have had an entirely different experience as a result of their mental space and the reactions of those around. On this day, three groups/individuals declined to be interviewed out of a total of twelve asked.

Sorting Responses

Appendix III. lists the questions asked of visitors to each memorial site. Responses to these questions at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial are grouped here thematically, displaying a wide range of opinions and experiences, as well as a good deal of agreement regarding particular aspects of the memorial. Visitors cite the use of names, change in height, and intimate nature of the site as effective features of the memorial that contribute to its cogency.

One Word On Emotion -

Humbled • Comforted • Emotional • Touching • Grabbing • Constantly-Changing • Shaken
Humbled • Comforted • Balanced • Surreal • Overwhelmed • Emotional • Excited • Grateful
• Heartbreak • Moving • Overpowering • Overwhelming • Healing • Shocking • Emptiness •
Moving • Quiet • Gratitude • Powerful • Moving • Horror • Powerful • Touching • Sadness •
Happiness • Confusion • Overwhelming • Beautiful Sadness • Awe • Overwhelming • Moving •
Solemn • Healing

On Names -

"It's a beautiful memorial about the cost of war and it's enumerated in the names" -- *Adult Female*

"I think it's just so personal because of the names" -- *Adult Female*

"The personalization of the names makes it much more human"

"Almost overwhelming in the number of names - hard to quantify"

"Hard to wrap your mind around it"

"It starts out just a few names... Then so many you can't register, and then back to just a few" -- *Adult Female*

"The number of casualties is just depressing"

"All the names are so much like your neighbors"

On Presence -

"It takes a long time to get friendship with this place" -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

"The undertow of the wall" -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

"Our society was changed because of this"

"It's simple – there's nothing grandiose about it, it's just simple. It's about the people. It's not about the biggest piece of granite or the prettiest carving – it's simple. Everybody on that wall is equal.

White, Black, Hispanic Officer, Enlisted, they're all the same" -- *Adult Male*

"The effect is, people are drawn to it, and the power of everything that's built into it impacts them without them even knowing it." -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

"There are certain areas I work on the wall and i can almost draw a demark line when the wall really takes over and works on people. Cuz it usually shuts them down, they usually get real quiet."

"It's always unintended consequences – what you don't see are the things that really mean the most. Maybe it's by accident, I don't know." -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

"When I first came down here I avoided it on purpose" -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

"There's no other memorial in this town that's black... and below ground... it's totally antithetical." -- *Adult Male*

"I don't know if I would call it pretty or even artistic - it's kind of bold when you get down to it." -- *Adult Male*

"It's very subtle"

"The least ostentatious"

"It's very solemn" -- *Adult Male*

"Seems very personal"

"It's like a crescendo - overwhelming by the middle" -- *Adult Female*

"The sheer enormity of it is incredible"

"Pretty spot on" -- *Adult Male*

"It asks for you to reflect"

"It's nice to take a pause"

"Subdued dazzle" -- *Adult Male*

"A memorial transcending so many people... this one has that power."

"No one wanted to hear your story... when the wall got here, that really changed." -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

On Grieving -

"The spirit that we're all in it together"

"Most of us who work here can tell it – just by looking at people can tell first-timers. First-timers are hesitant about even coming in, and then when they do walk in to there, they are as close to that chain link to keep you off the grass chain as can be. And if they do finally get to the panel where the name is, they are extremely hesitant to walk out and touch it. And you'll see them make 3 or 4 attempts." -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

"This could be something more major... 50,000 lives and there's a little wall... The human value of life is more now" - *Young Adult Female*

"A lady... was trying to [touch the wall]... it turned out it was her fiancé and it was her first time here. I

finally got her up to the wall, and she was beginning to get tearful, and she only wanted me to answer one question. She said, ‘may i kiss it?’ And I said ‘this is your moment you do what you want,’ and she gets over there and she very carefully kisses his name and then turns back to me and says ‘thank you. I have never married – he will always be my one and only.’” -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

On Emotions -

“[Volunteering here is the] most gratifying work I’ve ever done” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“Instinctive sense that I need to be here for a reason” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“I still get shaken when I go in there because of my personal experience with the one name that’s on The Wall, but i know other names that are on The Wall that I have learned.” -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

“I had come through here with the teenage children of my best friend from high school. And we walk through, and we got to the other end, and all I could do was sob. And they said ‘what’s wrong?’ And I couldn’t even... I couldn’t find a word... there was nothing I could say to them or describe to them that would have them understand what was wrong” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“Current veterans find this to be their emotional home” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“It’s my spot... I feel fortunate, I feel blessed” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“Once they find one name, they’re all ashamed – they’re ashamed that they’ve forgotten the person’s name – they don’t give themselves credit for remembering for 40 years, they only feel the shame of forgetting. So when they come here and locate one name, and then locate the others, it’s just the most remarkable thing in the world. I was here a few weeks ago and a guy said ‘i need to get to July 12th, 1967.’ I said ‘I can take you there’. and so he could start reading names and start connecting” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“The Vietnam vets were kind of treated at a distance, and you really didn’t advertise it, and you certainly didn’t wear your uniform. So I understand what it means about welcoming these guys back. We were never welcomed back.” -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

“It’s a healing space and it was designed to be one” -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

“A lot of servicemen can’t bring themselves to go in; they have a block. And we see them. Now over the years, we see the wall working to remedy that block. We spot the soldiers with the so-called thousand yard stare... they just get this fixation and they’re in space and time back there and they’re totally out of the moment where they are and what they’re doing is they’re working through the names, they’re working through the events, what led up, the things they could have done to save the guy... and all that’s going on, and usually the outside is very unemotional – you don’t see tears, you just see a loss – they’re lost. And then occasionally you’ll see them come back.” -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

“You see – this kind of memorial that encompasses outside the names – I’m sorry. That’s why you want to work here. You want to help people, you want to be here, you want to tell the stories – share it, let the wall do its work.” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“I can see why a lot of veterans from that period of war would be emotionally touched.” -- *Adult Female*

“My first time was very moving. Watching the older men was really impactful - part of it was sharing in that moment with them” -- *Adult Female*

“Some sadness, some happiness... And confusion about other peoples’ reactions... And my own” --
Young Adult Female

“People shut down as they get deeper” -- *Senior Male Volunteer*

On the Senses -

“The quietest” -- *Adult Male*

“It’s an entirely different place at nighttime – if anything, it’s even much more powerful. You remember as a kid you were afraid of the dark sometimes? It’s something akin to that your first time at nighttime.”
-- *Senior Male Volunteer*

“Anytime I ever walk through it – it’s just so quiet and thoughtful.” -- *Adult Male*

“I thought it was so apropos for Vietnam. It felt like going into a hole - almost like a bunker.” -- *Adult Female*

On Memory -

“We [the volunteers] are placed in an honorable position of being the safe keepers of the stories.” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“I come here only having the scars of being in a generation where men had no choice” -- *Senior Female*

Other Comments -

“The difficulty is having things always available to the visitor... when I watched the dedication, the opening of the 9/11 memorial, it made me want to fly to new York with a tracing pencil and some butcher block paper” -- *Senior Female Volunteer*

“It’s the one thing they talk about the most and this is all there is...” -- *Young Adult Female*

“I wish they didn’t have the ropes so we could go on the grass” -- *Young Adult Female*

“This camaraderie lasts forever... This is a brotherhood that goes on anywhere” -- *Senior Male Veteran*

At the 9/11 Memorial

Both of my visits to the 9/11 memorial occurred on cold, windy, uncomfortable February days. Given these circumstances, it is a powerful statement that so many groups and individuals were willing to stop and talk to a stranger with an audio recorder. In my time there, I asked to interview eighteen individuals/groups of people. Out of these, three parties declined - citing a lack of time as their reason - while 15 agreed to be interviewed. We stood or sat in the biting cold and wind, huddling at a close distance so as to hear and be heard by others.

All interviewees said that they did not take any rubbings or leave any mementos during their visit to the memorial, with one exception. A firefighter from England had brought a shirt from his home unit and left it beside the names of the first responders on the South Pool. Many of those interviewed said that they would have taken a rubbing if they had the materials to do so. Others said they would have done either had they known a specific name listed in the memorial.

Most of these people were visiting, and said that they had come to the memorial because they were in New York, and this was one of the destinations they wanted to visit during their stay. For some, it was one stop on a long sight-seeing journey, and for others it meant much more. One female from Ireland said that she was visiting New York for the third time, and had returned to the site of 9/11 also for her third time. She explained to me, "I would never come to New York and not come here - this is part of history."

Sorting Responses

Listed below are the categorized responses of visitors to the 9/11 Memorial, based on feedback from the interview questions found in Appendix III. Although both similarities and differences between responses are evident here as well, there is much greater variance than encountered at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Security was a point of great deviation; some felt comforted by the security measures, others found them necessary but slightly bothersome, and still others found them entirely unnecessary. There was some agreement, however, that the attitudes of the security personnel contribute to a more positive atmosphere, despite the lines and waiting. There was also a wide range of descriptions regarding the atmosphere of the memorial as a whole - some described it as "lively," others as "somber, and others as "peaceful."

One Word on Emotion -

Emotional • Sad Memories • Sadness • Reality • Eerie • Sad • Sad • Lonely • Calm • Peaceful
• Depressing • Heavy • Haunting • Sad • Memories • Sadness • Sombre • Cold • Sadness •
Sympathy • Sad

On Presence -

“The grace, the dignity of the memorial was very impactful.”

“Like a black hole - everyone falling into nothing” -- *Young Adult Male*

“Everything is not yet at peace with the spirits” -- *Young Adult Male*

“Eerie, dark energy” -- *Young Adult Male*

“Quite a somber place”

“It’s lively”

“It’s like the people are thrown into a black hole”

“Like a mystery”

“It’s calm - there are a lot of people but it’s still peaceful”

“It’s got a really weird feel to it”

“It feels heavy - the scope and scale - the emptiness of the voids”

“The first time I was here, I was struck by how big the space was” -- *Adult Male*

On Grieving -

“It’s awesome just to see that it doesn’t end – that the tears may still go on for some.” -- *Adult Female*

On Emotions -

“The positive thing is that everyone is remembered, but it’s really sad to think of that day... Very mixed emotions”

“To look down and see nothing and then to look up and see sky and planes... It’s just frightening - it hits home.”

“I love the idea of a hole. It’s a great picture of what happened to the families that lost someone - they have a hole in their heart” -- *Adult Female*

“Very heavy in my heart”

“Looking up just scares me. I don’t want to look up” -- *Young Adult Male*

“I felt like I might cry”

“Sympathy for everybody”

“Cold sadness in the air”

On Remembering -

“It was like a war zone”

“[Ground zero before the memorial] was more shocking” -- *Adult Male*

“You’re thinking in your head – you’re in new york city, it should be loud. And it wasn’t. It was very quiet.

And here, going through all the security and the lines... it kind of took away from the shock... But now you’re kind of seeing life coming back, whereas before it was kind of dead silence.”

“I used to walk through this building every day...” -- *Adult Male*

“I remember seeing the impacts, and when I look up... I just see it again”

“It makes me sad, but not the same sad as the last time we were here when there was rubble. It was quiet, not loud”

“This is a good way to try to remember”

On Security -

“The [security] people are very kind and accommodating” -- *Adult Female*

“I don’t see why they need [the security]. I think it should be open one day”

“We expected [the security] – we knew that that was coming... if anything, it made me feel better that we had to go through all that to get here because it made me feel safer. At the same time you wonder, would we be attacked here again? In this spot?” -- *Adult Female*

“By the time you got here, we kind of looked around and said ‘are we here?’ You kind of expected another line”

“The more security the better”

“It’s because of this that we have that security on airplanes. The security is good”

“We expected [the security] - if anything, it made me feel better”

“Too much security - over the top”

“People are so afraid of what happened. For me, it’s maybe too much, but I think it’s needed”

“[The security] takes away from it a wee bit - makes it a bit colder” -- *Young Adult Female visiting from overseas*

“Coming through security... I felt removed from the importance of the place”

“It’s very understandable to me why they’d have [the security]. I’ve been impressed by how accommodating they are. They’re trying to make it a good experience for everybody.”

“I felt very secure, but at the same time a little interrogated”

On The Pools -

"The pools are spectacular - a good way of marking the site. Simple, but nice"

"The sound of the water is nice"

"When you're by the water you really are quieted."

"I like the sound of the water... You can't hear the construction"

"It's eerie that you can't see the bottom"

"So deep - not being able to see the bottom"

"The most poignant part is the story behind the pools"

"The water starts from under the names like it's carrying them..." -- *Adult Female*

"A smaller child who can't see up to the names can still see the water" -- *Adult Female*

"I like the fact that you can see underneath the name plate there. And as I'm just standing here I still see the water..."

"The center of the pools seems to disappear"

"With all the construction noise, the sound of the water kind of took precedence; it hid the other noise. It's very present."

Other Comments -

"I would never come to New York and not come here... You can't not come - this is part of history." -- *Young Adult Female visiting from overseas*

"I wish there was an easy way for me to know what the symbolism of the place means - an explanation. I want to know the purpose to the way the designers did this." -- *Adult Male*

"We forgot all about [taking rubbings]. We don't have a person." -- *Adult Female*

"To imagine the sheer panic..."

"It struck me how many people in the prime of their lives had died" -- *Adult Female*

"I like looking at the names - it really registers"

Conclusion

Interviews proved extremely productive in revealing the attitudes, feelings, perceptions and thoughts of visitors to both the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials. As evidenced from the quotations above, some aspects of each memorial arose as common themes, yet a great deal of variance between individuals is apparent. The information presented here was used to inform a comparison of both memorials and subsequent design strategies advising the creation of impactful, lasting memorials.

5 Comparison

Introduction

The information presented throughout the previous chapters suggests that the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials are alike in aspects such as materiality and intention, and contrasting in scale, atmosphere, age, etc. To accurately and generally compare the experience of each memorial would require more information collected over a longer duration. Distinctions made here are based on the thesis' time frame, process, and methods employed, including both observations and interviews.

Commonalities

As experiential memorials, both memorial sites share certain characteristics. Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and juror for the 9/11 memorial competition, is well known for her gentle, simple, and meaningful design style. Perhaps because of her involvement in the design process of both memorials studied here, each work uses strategies such as abstraction and reflection to leave interpretation up to the individual visitor - to let each person decide what the memorial means to them.

Materials

Materially, the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials are quite similar. Each uses engraved names on reflective black stone to convey the extent of personal loss resulting from each tragic event. Visitors to both memorials cited these engraved names as a powerful, effective way to communicate this loss. Additionally, paving of pathways and plaza areas of both sites consists of larger smooth granite slabs combined with smaller stonework.

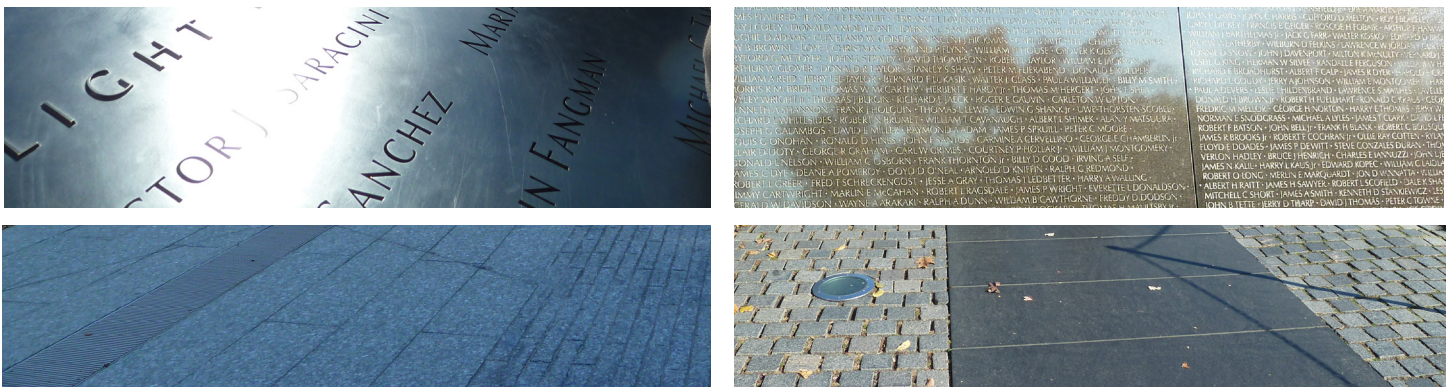


Figure 15: 9/11 engraved surface & paving and VWM engraved surface & paving (respectively)

Names

It is not simply the presence of the names that visitors find powerful, but in both memorials, the

organization of the names. Visitors like that those who died together are listed together on the memorial; for the Vietnam Veterans memorial, this means a chronological listing, and for the 9/11 memorial, an intricate organization strategy focused on grouping deceased individuals based on location of death, group of belonging, and personal connections. Michael Arad, designer of the memorial, calls this strategy ‘meaningful adjacencies’. Arad recalls, “I struggled with the question of the approach that didn’t create hierarchy” (2012 b). The organization of these names was a topic of great focus during the design process, because, as Arad explains, “the logic of their arrangement carried the most weight for family members.” As family members weighed in with their opinions, strategies were continuously altered until the idea of meaningful adjacencies was reached. This entailed reaching out to the families of 3,000 individuals and attempting of honor requests of names that the family wished to see listed next to their loved one on the memorial. The resulting organization of names has what Arad calls an “incredibly complex hidden logic;” a seemingly simple organization resulting from outreach, compromise, argument, and collaboration (2012 b).

Both Arad and Chief of Staff for the memorial, Allison Blais, articulated the success of this organization, given the interactions they witnessed between family members of the deceased on the opening of the memorial. Blais (2012) recounts the power of seeing these interactions on opening day:

You saw a lot of situations where two family members were coming up to two names and touching them, leaving a flower, and then realizing that the person standing next to them must be related to this person that meant so much to their loved one in life. And you know, taking this moment to introduce themselves and hug. It was this really extraordinary experience that I hadn’t, even with all of the years of putting together the names arrangement, had not anticipated. I think makes this memorial so unique and special. There’s no other memorial that has that kind of arrangement that brings people together in that way. That was extraordinary to see.

Relationship with Surroundings

Each memorial can also be seen as both separated from and integrated into its surroundings. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial - a subtle cut into the grassy fabric of the national mall - is very much a part of its park-like surroundings. Even so, the underground nature of the site cuts it off from the sights and sounds of the adjacent street. From street level, The Wall is an invisible drop in the horizon line, as its dark surface faces south toward the Mall. Marita Sturken (1991) describes this phenomenon: “The memorial’s relationship to the earth shifts between a sitelessness and site specificity, between context and decontextualization. It delicately balances between effacing and embracing the earth – it cuts into the earth, yet strikes a harmony with the terrain.”

Set within the noisy, bustling and dense surroundings of Lower Manhattan, the 9/11 Memorial is part of a much larger urban condition. Tall skyscrapers tower around the memorial, which itself is a void

within a built-up, fast-paced metropolis. With ongoing construction of the streets, sidewalks, and train station, the memorial is currently surrounded by chain-link fence, cranes, trucks, and other construction infrastructure. The sound of falling water from the memorial pools provides some sensory separation from the stimulating environment around, and marks the memorial space as one that is unique from the city. It is intended to someday be integrated into the city as an open public space (without security), while maintaining the restorative, respectful and autonomous atmosphere of a memorial.



Figure 16: The park surrounding the VVM with a separation between street and memorial



Figure 17: The dynamic urban setting of the 9/11 memorial

Established Connections

Although a non-physical dimension of design, I found the *ability to establish a connection* as the overwhelming factor determining who was most influenced by a memorial. Those who have or who make a personal connection with the individuals remembered in the memorial find their experience more moving. Throughout my research, I have heard countless stories of that moment of realization - when a name, a story, or a thought brings the visitor to a more complete, more striking understanding of the extent of loss represented by the memorial. For me, this moment came within my first twenty minutes

at the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial when a volunteer - a returned Vietnam veteran - shared with me his painful memory that will be forever captured in a single name on the wall. Here, the intimate scale, feeling of shared space, and the presence of these volunteers facilitates such a connection. At the 9/11 memorial, as Blais articulated, the highly complex organization of names makes this kind of contact possible for the families of victims. Undoubtedly, the design of a memorial can enable such connections to be made, and both memorials studied here deliberately allow these relationships to form.

Differences

Although the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials use much of the same language and arguably have similar intentions, aspects of their design and surroundings together create entirely different environments. Many of the experiential differences noted throughout this study seem to reflect the drastic difference in the sound and scale of both the memorial and its wider setting. Movement and speed are other characteristics that distinguish the memorials from one another, affecting relationships between people and appropriate behaviors.

Movement

One clear observable difference between memorials is the pattern of movement. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, there are two main routes of circulation: west to east, and east to west. Most visitors enter from the west, coming from the area of the Lincoln Memorial. As Jeffrey Karl Ochsner (1997) explains in *A Space of Loss: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, the walk alongside the wall is meant to be experienced as a procession:

Because the path along the wall is paved only to a width of ten feet, one walks along the memorial, experiencing it sequentially and taking in the names only gradually. As the path descends, the number of names grows, however. For each visitor, there seems to be a point at which the immensity of more than fifty-eight thousand names becomes apparent. Suddenly, it seems that the distant abstraction of so many dead and missing has become very real. Here are more than fifty-eight thousand individual names - every one different, every one a real person who lived and died... At some point along our descent into the space, it is as if we are 'caught' by the memorial - or perhaps we suddenly catch on to what the memorial is about.

With the experience of descending in one direction and ascending in the other, Maya Lin has carefully crafted what one visitor to the memorial called a 'crescendo' - a walk that becomes heavier, deeper, and more intense as one approaches the apex, and then lifting and ethereal as one continues onward and outward. This singular option for movement allows visitors to share in emotions and moments of realization together. The pre-determined single route of circulation of the Vietnam Veterans memorial compares to the innumerable possibilities at the 9/11 memorial. The scale and plaza-like quality of the space allow for a wide range of paths and stopping points. Some people choose to walk around the

pools clockwise, some counterclockwise, and others choose not to walk around the pools at all. Figure 6 demonstrates this difference.

Sound

Another striking difference between memorials was the volume of conversation, likely a reflection of the scale of the memorial as well as its surroundings. Because the path along the Vietnam memorial wall is only ten feet wide, visitors are compressed together as they begin the procession along the wall. This intimate distancing creates an environment in which loud talking is not only unnecessary but also socially unacceptable. One man said of the memorial, “I mean, nobody talks here - unlike the others. Anytime I ever walk through it – it’s just so quiet and thoughtful.”

Conversely, the open, noisy, bustling atmosphere of the 9/11 memorial makes entirely new behaviors appropriate, including loud talking, quick walking, lying down, and even yelling to others from afar. Some visitors I interviewed mentioned coming to the site before there was a memorial there - back when it was rubble. They all commented on how dramatic the silence was then - that in the middle of noisy New York City, this place had become eerily quiet.

Today, the city has made its way back into Ground Zero, and the opportunity for both an integrated and silent memorial does not exist. Michael Arad carefully designed the sound of falling water within the pools to “provide some sort of separation from the everyday hubbub of city, but not in a way that would be so overwhelming that it would become distracting and demand attention in and of itself,” describes Arad. “It provides you with a sense of enclosure almost. You can hear the city, but it’s somewhat muffled. But at the same time, you can have a conversation at a normal speaking level with somebody standing next to you” (2012 b).

Height

Given the unique contextual considerations of each memorial, decisions regarding height are made based on wanted or unwanted stimuli. While one memorial uses a change in height to establish an experiential gradient and protection from unwanted traffic noise, the other maintains a primarily flat landscape to promote a sense of democracy, equality, and truly public space.

The experience of the ‘crescendo’ at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is born out of this dramatic but gradual change in height. As one begins to walk the downward path along the wall, a threshold is eventually met when the height of the wall overtakes the height of the person, enclosing them into the memorial space. Although this point differs depending on the height of the individual, each person in

their own time, reaches it. Caroline McDonald (2009) writes,

The height of the walls gives the space an enclosed quality and blocks out background noise allowing the visitor to concentrate on the commemorative meaning presented by the walls... The overall feeling of the memorial is one of solemnity when faced with the evidence of so much loss, the mass of names that the visitor sees on first entering the memorial is succeeded, as the visitor progresses into the memorial, by the contemplation of the individual names.

I interviewed one volunteer at the wall who described this same threshold: “there are certain areas I work on The Wall and I can almost draw a ‘demark’ line when The Wall really takes over and works on people. It usually shuts them down, they usually get real quiet.”



Figure 18: Height Change in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

Michael Arad’s strategy for the 9/11 memorial was quite different. He intended to not only make the 8 acre site a memorial space, but also a truly public space - one in which New Yorkers could consistently feel a sense of shared ownership and community. He disagreed with Daniel Libeskind’s original plans for the site because, to him, they contrasted this goal of bringing the memorial and the city together. He believed that there should be no change in grade as Libeskind had proposed, but that the memorial, streets and sidewalks should all be at the same level. There would be no sunken plaza, because as Arad strongly believed, “sheltering the site... would do a huge disservice to the city.” In this way, he hoped to bring everyday life together with memorialization; “I firmly believe that these two things are not in contradiction to one another” (2012 a).



Figure 19: The Flat Landscape of the 9/11 Memorial, with Stone Benches and Pools as the Only Changes in Height

Participation

While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has undergone three decades of use in comparison to the one year of the 9/11 memorial, extreme differences in visitor participation can be noted based on objects left behind and engagement in activities like taking rubbings of names on the memorial. Realizing that this is a cultural tradition that grows and changes over time, in another three decades, the 9/11 Memorial may play a similar role to the one the Vietnam Veterans Memorial plays now. Through observation and interviews at both sites, I found that both participatory behaviors - leaving objects behind and taking rubbings - are much more common at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Although tradition likely accounts for much of this, the presence of volunteers armed with paper and rubbing pencils facilitates such interaction.

Architect Michael Arad (2012 b) acknowledges that this kind of participation has always been a desired outcome of the 9/11 memorial as well: “We always planned on having a very direct, tactile and emotional relationship – we planned on the rubbings, we planned on making sure that the bronze is always comfortable to the touch.” Yet without people there to enable the process, many visitors find themselves without pencil and paper, unable to have the interaction they would like to with the memorial.

In my time at both memorials, I saw numerous objects left behind at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, including uniforms, flowers, letters, bottles, pictures, etc. At the 9/11 Memorial, I saw one bouquet of flowers and one of the men I interviewed said that he had left a T-shirt from his firefighter’s unit at home in England. Although likely influenced by the days and times of my visits, it is fair to say that this tradition is long established at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and only just forming at the 9/11 memorial.



Figure 20: Observed Participation

Seating

Designed as very different kind of spaces, each memorial takes a different approach to engagement, relaxation and participation. At the Vietnam Veterans memorial, there is no place to sit along the ten-foot-wide walking path adjacent the wall. Visitors in this space walk, stand, or crouch, but rarely ever sit on the ground. Eliminating this opportunity may inconvenience the elderly or disabled, but it promotes a high level of engagement with the wall within that space. On exterior walking paths around the memorial, I noticed that benches face away from the wall, even in places with a prime view through the trees. The reasoning for this I cannot fathom, as this would be a great vantage point from which to see the entire memorial.

Conversely, the 9/11 memorial is host to a scattered set of heavy, stone benches. Visitors use these benches for many activities, as displayed below. Such uses suggest that users feel unharnessed by the typical behavioral codes of a memorial, and instead treat this space as the public park space that Arad hoped the memorial would also provide.



Figure 21: Seating Behaviors at the 9/11 Memorial

Reflection



Figure 22: Reflection

Although obviously present at both memorials, reflection plays a different purpose in each. At the Vietnam Veterans memorial, visitors see their own reflection superimposed on the list of individual names carved onto the surface of the wall. This serves to provide meaning for the names - to make the statement that any one of those tiny lettered names was connected to a reflection just like our own. We could have been them.

It seems the reflective quality of the pools at the 9/11 memorial has a different significance. Because the surface of the pool is slanted, looking at the engraved names does not reflect one's own self necessarily, but always the sky. In commemorating an event about terrorism - about the damage of a single plane - the sky holds a great deal of significance and fear. This reminder puts the name in the context of that day - in the context of how they died, making the simple engraving all the more powerful. Observing behaviors at both sites, far more people were seen looking upwards at the 9/11 memorial. While the Vietnam Veterans memorial is intimately connected to the land, the 9/11 memorial is equally connected to the sky; both of these elements comes through in the reflection of the memorial's surface.

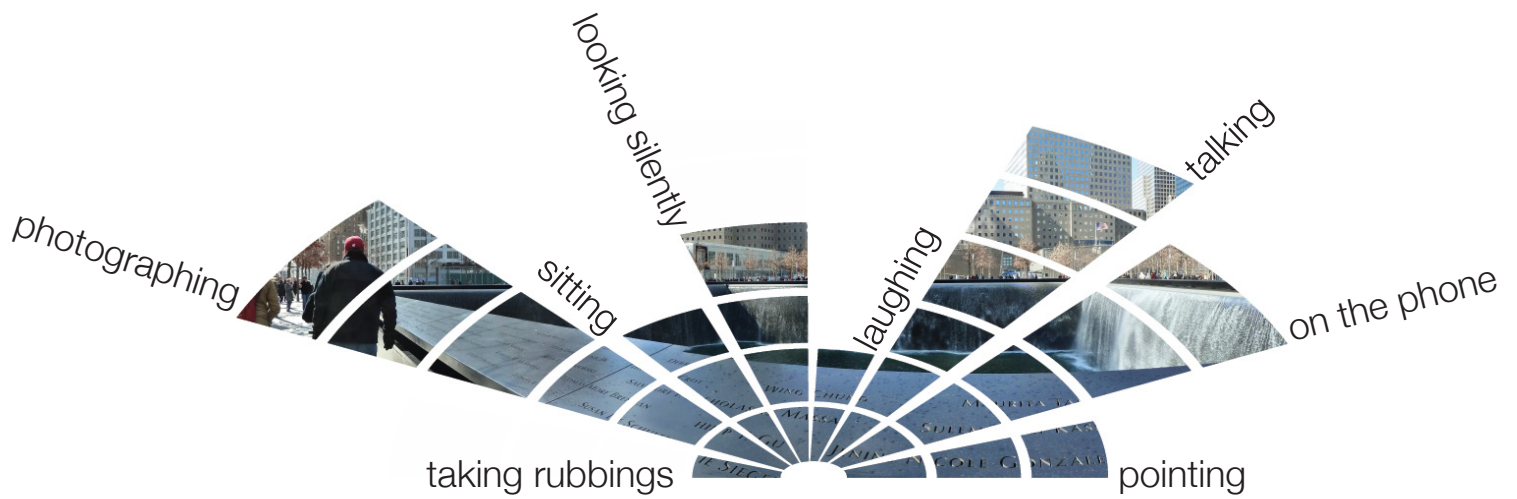
Security

Possibly the most striking difference between memorials is the approach. Moving towards the Vietnam Veteran's memorial, one walks along the shaded paths of the National Mall, coming to the descending walkway along the wall. As I described in my personal experience, the 9/11 memorial is quite different. The need for visitors passes, the wait through numerous lines, and the airport-like security check-point makes the experience of the memorial secondary to the experience of the security. In his blog post "My visit to the 9/11 Memorial," Arty Van Why (2012) describes this experience:

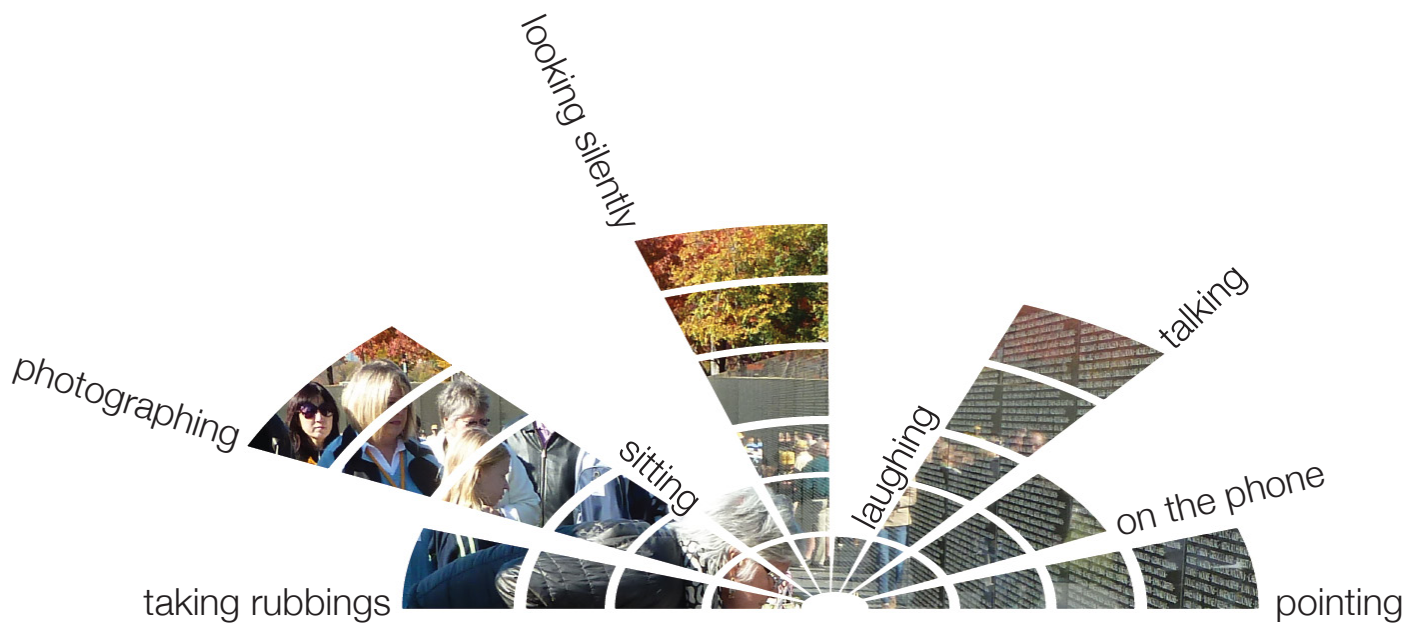
I knew we were all there to see the Memorial but I wasn't there out of curiosity or with a sincere desire to see where the tragedy had taken place. I had been there the morning of that tragedy

so, for me, this was as if I was waiting to see a loved one laid to rest. It didn't feel right; standing there among people in casual conversations; waiting for the line to move. Just as it wouldn't if I was forced to stand in a long line of strangers outside of a funeral home to view a member of my family.

Although many visitors seemed comforted by the security, a few agreed with Mr. Why: "I felt removed from the importance of the place," one interviewee recalled of going through the security. I found that in general, of the people I interviewed, the US residents actually liked the security because it made them feel safe, whereas international visitors found it over-the-top and unnecessary. Both the memorial's designer and Chief of Staff assured me that the measure is temporary and that eventually the memorial will be open to the public with no such barriers. Arad (2012 b) explained, "It's not as if we designed it with that experience in mind. It's a temporary measure until construction is completed."



9/11 Memorial Behaviors



Vietnam Veterans Memorial Behaviors

Figure 23: Behavioral Rating Systems

6 Continuing the Language of Loss

Introduction

After synthesizing findings from an investigation of two high-profile experiential memorials, the ultimate aim is to offer principles or guidelines that may be useful in designing memorials. Although limited by only four visits to the sites, this research helped to identify design strengths and specific ways in which the studied memorials affect human experience. As stated throughout this thesis, the success of any memorial design is dependent upon the context of the site, the event being memorialized, and the culture of its specific place. Six guidelines, each informing the experience of the place, emerge as part of the learning derived from this research process.

Lasting Memorials

The study of two memorials, separated by three decades of memory, requires consideration of the relevance and lifetime of the events being remembered. The previous chapters have focused on defining, explaining and comparing these memorials to one another, but the topic of age and future relevance is yet to be discussed. We must ask - what will the memorial mean once the generations with a direct memory of the event are no longer living? Paul Goldberger, in *Up From Zero: politics, architecture, and the rebuilding of New York* writes, “The truly transcendent memorials are not limited by our memories and are able to inspire a powerful emotional response whatever experience we bring to them” (2004). “The meanings of memorials change over time, and each generation brings a new interpretation to what it sees,” he continues (Goldberger, 2004). Yet knowing that this lasting memorial is possible is far from creating the real thing. How does one build in the present for a future time and people? How does the significance and power of a memorial endure for generations who become increasingly detached and distanced from the memory of the memorialized events?

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner (1997) points to the role of symbolism in securing or fostering understanding over time. The representation of individual names, used in both memorials studied here, is one example of such a symbol: “It is because we can associate the name of the deceased with his or her life... that the name can serve to evoke our internal feelings connected with the deceased. Symbolization is an essential component of memory.” Although we may not know the person engraved upon the memorial’s surface, we may know another by the same name, or have some other connection to the name which makes that life all the more real. Yet it is still difficult to hypothesize what symbols will mean to later generations.

In *Up From Zero: politics, architecture, and the rebuilding of New York*, Paul Goldberger (2004) quotes Anita Cortini, who asks whether lasting significance is even something to be sought: “Maybe they

shouldn't have long-term relevance – not everything should be remembered forever,' she claims. 'Do we want to celebrate the culture of death, instead of the culture of the living? Do we want to have so much reminding us of the terror and the tragedy, or more of a living memorial about our culture?'" Cortini's comment assumes that the present memorial 'celebrate[s] the culture of death'. My feeling is that a memorial should last if that is its intent. Some temporary memorials are among the most effective and moving. Yet if the aim is to remind, to educate, to inspire, or to provoke thought over time, then it seems a memorial should be designed to last. Although no prescribed strategy can ensure that this happens, specific intentions can enable it. Each design guideline listed below supports this goal of creating memorials expressing the moment they are made and the future into which they evolve.

Developing a language of loss in memorial design: qualities, features, materials and experiences

1. Create spaces for personal interaction and reflection that have the potential to promote sharing and exchange between visitors

Justification:

Whether coping with a tragic event or simply exploring a new place for the first time, people prefer determining and controlling their own levels of social interaction. Optimizing one's level of interaction is called privacy. Because we all deal with life events in different ways, this kind of control makes us feel comfortable. Although a memorial may inspire uncomfortable emotions, such as horror, grief, and shock, providing a common ground and respecting personal choice through design can enable these emotions to resonate in ways that people can connect to.

Design Considerations:

The use of names is a common and familiar unit of measure for life that people readily relate to. Yet, as Michael Kimmelman (2003) points out, "By aesthetic and social consensus, names are today a kind of reflexive memorial impulse, lists of names having come almost automatically to connote 'memorial,' just as minimalism has come to be the presumptive sculptural style for memorial design, the monumental blank slate onto which the names can be inscribed." In repetition of this device, its power may be compromised. Thinking beyond these widely used methods could produce more startling, original ways to memorialize, much like the Vietnam Veterans memorial was before it became the prototypical memorial. In what other ways can we represent human life while relating it to each individual visitor? Fingerprints? Footprints?

2. Allow for freedom of interpretation

Justification:

Especially in commemorating highly controversial events, memorial design must be respectful of multiple and conflicting opinions, values and memories. In leaving interpretation up to the visitor, each individual is left to decide how they wish to interact with their memory and the memorial itself. In this way, those remembering a tragic event remain in control of how their memory, thoughts, and personal reactions to the physical memorial setting intersect.

Design Considerations:

Allowing each visitor to engage with the memorial in ways of their own choosing offers opportunities for varied experience, expression and interpretation. It is important to consider the phenomenological dimensions of the memorial and to enable different visitors to seek out varying levels and kinds of experiences for themselves.

3. Create opportunities for adapting and changing over time, allowing for changing cultural interpretations and contexts

Justification:

As a memorial ages, there will come a time when most visitors no longer remember or connect to the event being memorialized. Because our continuously-changing environment shapes who we are, these people will likely experience and interpret their experience altogether differently. Design that enables a timeless adaptation by others is important if a memorial is going to be able to live into the future and continue to communicate its meaning.

Design Considerations:

Enabling participation with the memorial can give it this capacity to change over time, reflecting the lives and views of those who change it. Objects brought to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial allow visitors to add meaning and significance to the memorial, providing younger generations with a relatable connection to the unknown list of names. Materials can also reflect change or adapt over time, such as metals, plant material, fabric, etc. Such materials must be selected with an understanding of their capacity to evolve. How could changing materials, like the decay of fabric, the growth of plants, or the corrosion of metal, help to build this adaptive quality?

4. Provide opportunities for interaction both with the memorial and with other visitors

Justification:

Memorials generally, although not always, commemorate human lives. Interaction with such a memorial as well as with other visitors can establish a greater understanding of the value of human life among visitors. Many tragic events are human-caused, and the result of a misunderstanding between people. Providing opportunities to meet and interact with other people can foster empathy, sharing, and a culture of understanding, compassion and respect.

Possible Design Responses:

The intentional use of an intimate human scale puts people in close contact with one another. While they may not interact directly through dialogue, their physical proximity and presence can promote this outcome.

5. The site, culture, and event should all inform the design process

Justification:

No prescribed strategy will be successful in all contexts. All design components must be carefully weighed in order to create a memorial that benefits a specific place, its people, and the sense of grief and loss associated with the event being memorialized.

Design Considerations:

Often a memorial is created on the same site where an event took place. There is often a temptation to wipe the slate, restart, and begin fresh. Yet the remains or remnants of what once was can also be a powerful reminder and memory device of their own. Arty Van Why (2012) describes his experience at the 9/11 memorial, asking his friend,

'Why aren't I feeling any emotion?' He said, 'Maybe because nothing is familiar.' Yes. That was it exactly. I was disoriented. I could have been standing in the middle of any random memorial. I wanted to point out to Bill where the steps were that I ran up the morning of 9/11; running to save the people I saw jumping. I couldn't determine where they might have been. Nor was there any indication of where I had stood under the shelter of Building Number 5 as I helplessly watched; unable to rescue.

Yes, the two pools allowed me to know where the twin towers stood but there was nothing that reminded me of all that the World Trade Center had been. The plaza between the north and south towers had always been vibrant and full of life; especially in the summer. The noontime concerts, the food vendors and their carts, the benches we all sat on as we ate lunch, the fountain in the center of the plaza. There was nothing to convey to people who had never seen the World Trade Center before 9/11 just how magnificent it was. The 'city within a city' as I called it.

Preserving the identity of a place - even the damaged identity - can be a powerful way to remember it. As described in the previous quote, when markers and associations are lost, the memorial itself becomes isolated from the event, even if it is physically located on the exact site.

6. Sensory elements should be used like materials to build a powerful emotional experience that transcends the purely visual

Justification:

Many of the features that visitors to both the 9/11 and Vietnam Veterans Memorials identified as successful were those that produced a sensory response: the falling water within the memorial pools, the change in height of the Vietnam memorial wall to produce an evolving sensation of enclosure and release, the tactile presence of engraved names, the silence of separation from the surrounding landscape. These specific sensory devices help to foster and support a particular emotional response; one that cannot be obtained simply by looking at a photograph, but one that requires a greater understanding of the intricacies of that place.

Design Considerations:

Depending on the event being remembered, certain senses can be more powerful than others. For example, the sound of an airplane at the 9/11 memorial is a powerful and horrific reminder of the damage and fear resulting from that event. Designers should first consider the desired sensory outcome, and then look into what sensory materials could build such a condition.

Conclusion

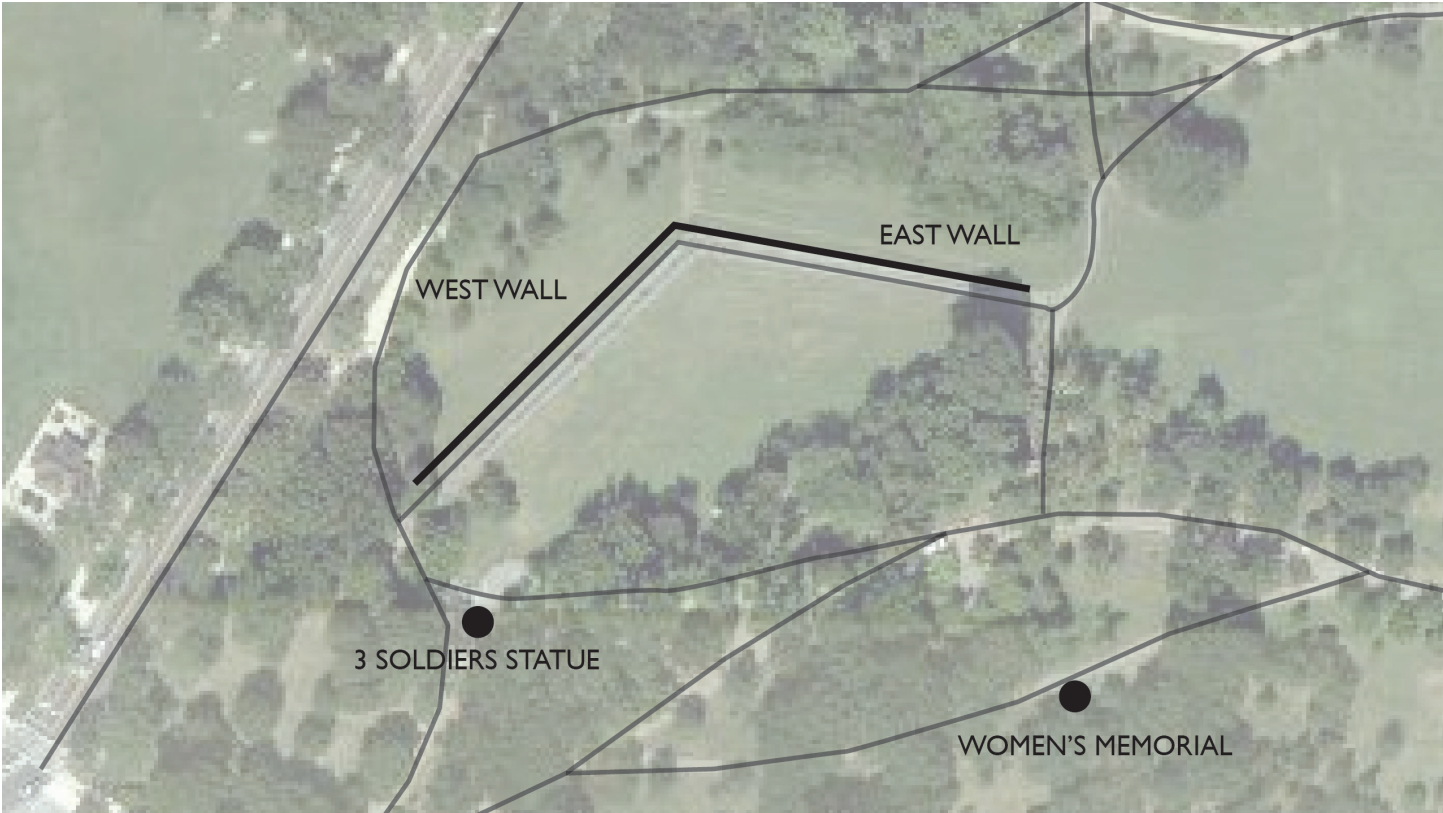
In spite of their different scales, contexts and time periods, Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Michael Arad's 9/11 Memorial each exemplifies the experiential memorial. Beginning with a definition of important memorial vocabulary, I introduced both study sites within this context of the experiential memorial. I then presented relevant findings from my own personal on-site experience, observations, photography, and interviews, which informed a comparison of both memorials. This careful study into two places impressed upon me the complexity of context and design, as each memorial was seemingly 'simple' in its exterior qualities, but quite complex when compounded with user behaviors, perceptions, emotions and memories. Some of my data collection methods were better than others at discerning this complexity. As mentioned, the greatest amount of specific, informative material came through conversation with visitors at each memorial. I learned that timed photography, although desirable for its simplicity and ability to reveal wider trends, was impractical and inefficient at collecting the information that I sought in this study. Throughout this process, I gained a greater understanding for the effects of certain design elements on visitor experience, and used this knowledge to inform the six design guidelines presented here. Although inherently no prescribed strategy can build an effective memorial, these guidelines acknowledge the unique conditions of each place and person, which is the imperative that all memorials must address.

The journey to undertake this honors thesis began during the Spring of 2011 when studying with Professor Jacky Bowring at Lincoln University in New Zealand. In her Design Critique class, I wrote a meta-critique of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial that sparked my curiosity in memorials and helped me to realize the valuable role they play in our built environment. Weeks before this class started, the devastating Christchurch earthquake of February 22nd violently shook the city, ending the lives of nearly 200 individuals, and destroying much of the infrastructure that once was downtown Christchurch. Images of the damage, extreme loss, and heartbreak, as well as the constant aftershocks that followed, kept the tragic results of this event at the front of my mind. This event, along with Bowring's influence, inspired me to deeply consider how design can engage people, promote a sense of togetherness after such a tragedy, and create spaces to personally deal with loss. These sites of engagement and experience can compel us to remember and offer powerful moments of sharing, grieving and thought. Designers have a tall order when conceiving such powerfully evocative and meaningful places that last through generations and impact individuals under widely varying contexts.

Upon my return to Cornell in the Fall of 2011, I was driven to follow this interest in memorials and human-place interaction through my honors research. Already captivated by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and recently intrigued by the high-profile 9/11 memorial, I looked to two of the world's most

important memorial sites for greater understanding of this relationship between people, place and memory. I have found this experience extremely eye-opening, and without it, would never have fully understood the power of experience and place making that occurs in the space of a memorial. Through this study, I learned to see, look, question and discover in new ways and know that it will influence me as I move forward into my future design life. Most importantly, it will inspire me to wonder and question the essence of things, and to carefully consider the emotions, sensitivities, feelings and experiences of those for whom memorial sites are made. Ultimately, I am left with a growing desire to aid in processes of grieving and memory, as well as a greater understanding of the language of loss, and how knowledge of this vocabulary can contribute to meaningful, impactful and enduring landscapes of loss.

Appendix I: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Interview Map



- HERE BEFORE?

BROUGHT YOU HERE TODAY?

PERSONAL CONNECTION?

TOUCH?

RUBBINGS?

LEAVE?

FEELINGS?
- FROM?

GROUP SIZE?

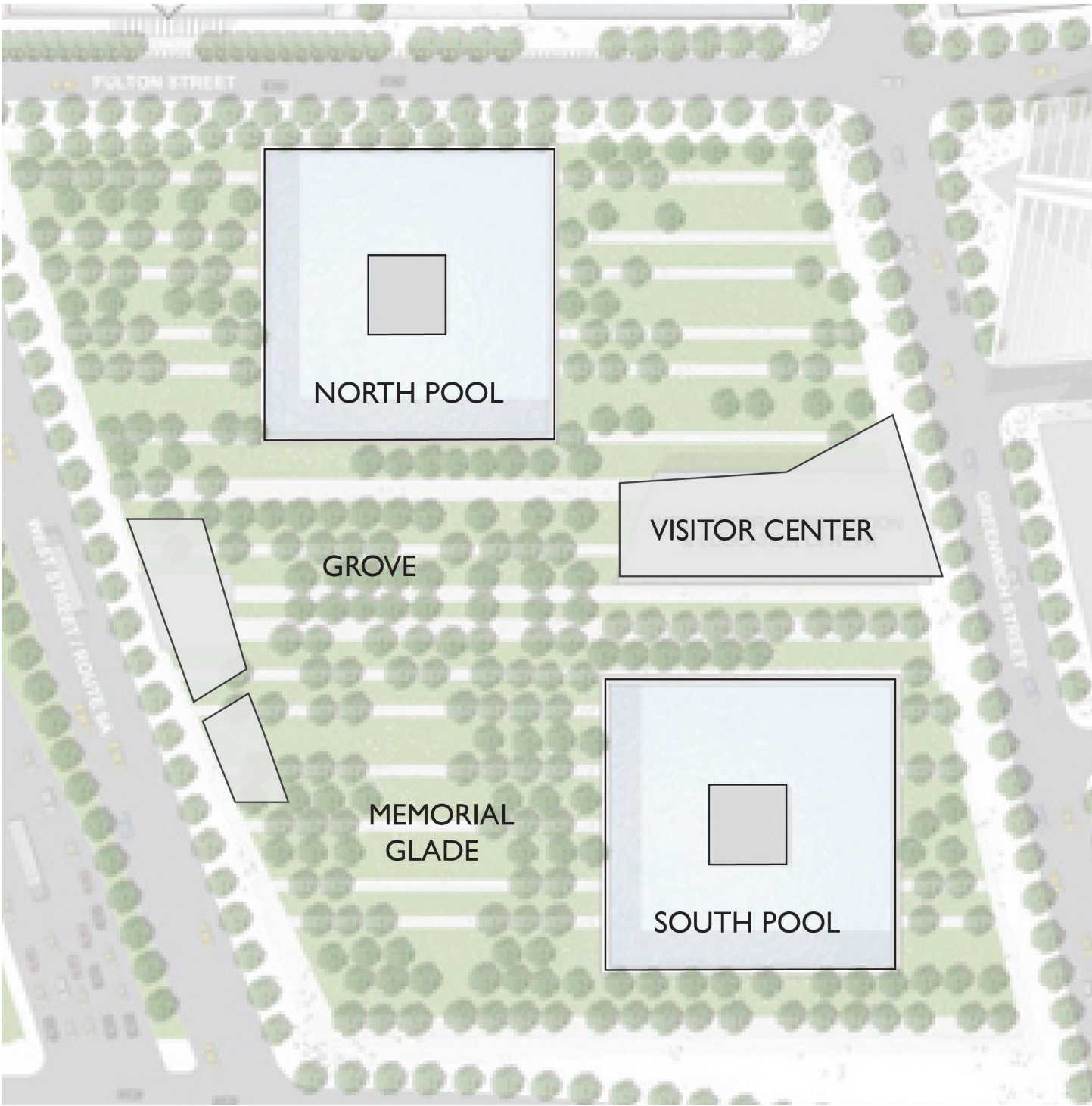
FEATURE?

WHY?

WISH WERE DIFFERENT:

AGE	18 - 35	36 - 55	56 +	GENDER	M	F					
EXPERIENCE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Appendix II: 9/11 Memorial Interview Map



GENDER: M F AGE: 18 - 35 35 - 55 55+

FROM: LOCAL VISITING

EXPERIENCE RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix III: On-site Interview Questions

- Note age and gender
- 18 – 35, 35 – 55, 55 +
- Local or visiting? Where from? Group size?

- I am a student researching what makes a particularly effective memorial – would you be interested in answering a few questions? (Feel free to stop at any point, or not answer specific questions. Your responses are anonymous.)
- Have you ever been here before? Is this your first visit? (to memorial/site?)
- What brought you here today?
- Do you have any personal connection to the people remembered here?
- Did you touch the memorial? Take any rubbings? Leave anything there?
- What feelings are you experiencing here?
- This being the world trade center memorial, there is a lot of security here – how is that dynamic of security impacting your experience here? (only for 9/11 Memorial)

- To learn more about your experience here today I have a map. Would you mind drawing the path you took?
- Is there a particular place or feature that stands out in your mind more than others?
- Can you describe why it stands out?
- How would you rate your experience here? 1 being extremely negative, 10 being extremely positive.
- Can you describe why you're having this response?
- Is there something you wish were different here?

- Is there anything you shared with me that you prefer I not include in my research?
- Thank you for your time.

Appendix IV: Interview with Allison Blais, Chief of Staff of the 9/11 memorial (transcription)

How did you end up as the chief of staff for the memorial?

It was sort of a winding road. I came down to work at the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation in 2004. I was a project manager for the chairman's office there, working on policy and program related initiatives, and I was there for a couple years. Part of my job was to help to establish the foundation that is now the private non-profit that is the National September 11th Memorial and Museum. I was involved in a lot of different aspects of the downtown redevelopment and revitalization when I was at LMDC, but definitely always felt like the Memorial and Museum were going to be the heart of everything that was happening. So, I ended up being able to take a position over here when things were just getting going. My boss had just become the new president. There was one president before him who was not here for very long and Joe had just stepped into the role. He was looking for somebody to sort of play the same kind of role I had at the LMDC. So I was fortunate enough to be able to move over here.

Were you involved in the process of choosing the design at all?

I actually got to LMDC right after the memorial design had been chosen in '04. Libeskind's master plan was selected in '03. And then, in '04 is when the design competition for the memorial was completed. So, when I got there they were just really starting to figure out how to translate this vision that these architects have put on paper into reality, and does it actually work with all of the engineering and logistics of the rest of the master plan. So there were a lot of different balls in the air, everybody trying to figure out how to make this work now. There were a lot of moving parts, especially underground where the infrastructure overlaps between dozens of projects.

That was one of the things I was curious about. Was it difficult to—how did you balance the artistic vision, the family's request, all the political constraints? Things like that.

It's such a tough question to answer because as it's happening day by day, it's hard to really step back and see in the big picture, how all of this is going to balance out in the end. But I think everyone working on the project from the very beginning ... there was just this sense that certain things could change on the plan and engineering logistics would obviously have to be resolved and certain elements may end up be done differently than people had originally envisioned, and that was fine. But, the memorial had to be what was selected. That that vision had to be realized. Even the details of the memorial design itself changed significantly over the course of the next few years, but I think the core vision of it is still there and

I think the architect of the Memorial, Michael Arad, would say the same thing: that the design is what he envisioned even though elements changed for various reasons: families' wishes, political and engineering and logistical concerns, etc. He went through a big redesign process in 2006 that was partially because family members had specific wishes that they wanted realized, particularly the names be moved above grade. They were initially down at the bottom of the waterfalls with a ramp you would walk down in order to stand in front of them. So partly driven by that concern, partly driven by various political concerns and budget concerns, security concerns, etc.--we went through a big process in which Michael Arad—the architect – was involved every step of the way and any change that was proposed we sort of took a temperature. Is that okay, do you still keep your core vision if we make this change? And he, in the end I think was disappointed that some things changed but at the same time recognized that they needed to. He saw what the families wanted and that in the end this would make this a better experience for people coming to the memorial.

What was it like giving Maya Lin a tour?

Oh, that was so amazing. She obviously was involved in the beginning as part of the memorial jury that selected the design. Throughout the competition process she was the one that all of the reporters wanted to know what she thought and a lot of critics, when the design was chosen, said, "Oh, this is really sort of a reimagining of her aesthetic and of course this is the kind of thing they would choose as minimalist architecture." I think she didn't know really what to expect from the experience when she came, so it was really interesting to see her reaction. We stepped on to the plaza, walked up to the pools and she was just overwhelmed. And sort of, I think, had this sense of real hopefulness because she hadn't envisioned the sound of the water, and was so overcome by it and the way that it sort of takes you out of the city. That even with all this construction surrounding you and the regular busy-ness of being in the middle of Manhattan, it all went away. That approach to the pools, as you get closer and closer, you have this sort of fade out effect of all the city sound as you get to the names, which are the core experience of the whole thing. And I think for her, she saw that as it all coming together and it seemed like she sort of had a sense of relief, and she sighed a little bit and there was a sense of, "This was definitely the right call, this is the right decision that we made."

I'm actually studying this memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Oh, you are? Cool.

Yeah, so I'm looking at interpreting people's experience in both of those landscapes. So, it's interesting hearing about Maya Lin's experience of this one.

Definitely. And it's such a different memorial. On the Mall obviously it's a totally different experience because you're already on this sort of, quiet space. It's already a quiet and reverential space. In the middle of New York it's totally different. Full of regular everyday life, and you know, sidewalks that are as crammed as Times Square now all around the site. So it's a really different thing and you have to actually take people out of that somehow with not a lot of space in which to do it.

Yeah.

That's part of why the waterfalls and the sound of them are so crucial to the whole thing.

Yeah.

I'm not sure the architects knew how important that was going to be when they even designed it. There were other reasons they chose water, but everybody that has come to visit it seems like that's what most people are surprised by, is the sound.

Yeah, yeah. Well that was one thing that I definitely noticed was at the Vietnam Memorial you know, the silence of it, it's so quiet.

Yeah.

That that's really powerful, and with this one you can never have silence in an area of New York City like that.

Right.

So it's interesting how that then affects the behavior of the people there. You know, people tend to talk louder and things like that, it's a different kind of memorial space.

True.

Yeah, it was really interesting. So, one of the things I wanted to ask you about was the plan for security in the future because that's definitely a big part of the experience coming in.

Right. It's a temporary part, fortunately. Eventually the memorial will be an entire city block so we'll have

sidewalks on all four sides. And people can just walk on and off as they want to. Michael really envisioned it as a living memorial in the sense that it's a space that the city can use, residents and business folks in the area walking through the plaza, sitting on the benches in the sun, things like that. But for now the entry path is the way it is because we are on all four sides surrounded by construction and we have a fence up around the whole thing. We have to live by various codes and capacity limits and it's an enclosed area, so NYPD, FDNY, all of our security experts—they all looked at the unique safety and security needs that come from that condition. So we have to do screening for now, but as parts of the site around us are completed we're hoping to open up more entrances and it should become more and more of an open experience and transition into what it's intended to be in the long run.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. One of the interesting comments that I got that I wasn't expecting was that the security kind of, you know, you go through this set of lines and things like that and then once you finally get to the memorial you have this sense of arrival and they were wondering whether you would have that if it was open as a city block like....

That's interesting. I don't know. And you know, one of the things that our museum director talks about in the context of the museum is that she likens it to an exhibit almost. You know, it's a product of 9/11 that we have this kind of necessity in our lives. And we've had a bunch of visitors comment on that, that as they're going through security you realize that this site has been attacked twice. And it sort of reminds you, right as you're going into the experience, of the history of this place. I'm sure people take it different ways, but generally the feedback we've gotten from surveys is that people actually appreciate feeling safe and having that sort of comfort, that feeling that there are definitely folks looking out for them around the site—especially while the surrounding construction of all these mega-projects can make the experience very disorienting.

Uh-huh. Yeah that was interesting. I found that at least the Americans seemed to really appreciate it and then when I asked a few international visitors, they said "Oh, it seems unnecessary. It seems over the top." So that was interesting to me.

That is interesting.

So, how was Bloomberg and the whole politics of it influencing the process for you?

The Mayor became the chairman of the memorial in 2006 right before I started working here. And before that it had been John Whitehead who was the chairman. It's interesting and a fortunate thing for us that although this organization is a private, non-profit, the Mayor is the Mayor and so we are part of the City

in a very real sense. That has been great for the project because it helps us bring all of the right people to the table, all of them focused on how important this memorial and museum are to our city, and streamline the process in a lot of ways. You know, I think when we were at CTB, I was saying a little bit about just developing that access route to get people into the site.

Yeah, yeah.

It was a nightmare of so many different agencies that had to be involved and new costs that were coming up: it's the state's property on West St. because it's a highway and it's the city's property across the street from that, and the Port Authority's within the World Trade Center site, and various federal agencies involved in the whole process so, it's sort of a crazy tangled mess. But, having the advocacy from City Hall was huge for us. So, there's that and then there's also obviously that the mayor as a fundraiser is extraordinary. He himself when he became chairman gave his own personal gift and basically started calling up all his friends and companies he knew needed to get involved right away, realizing we had to raise over 400 million dollars. I don't know if we would have made it to that goal without him; he really made it a personal cause as soon as he became chairman. And I think it's a funny thing because at the World Trade Centers, there is really no official City roll because it's Port Authority land so it's really the states of New York and New Jersey who have control over it. And then you've got Silverstein Properties, who have leases on the commercial buildings. The City had always been at the table from the beginning but never had an official role in the site. So the Mayor becoming Chairman of the Memorial and Museum gave him that role.

I'm also, since I'm looking at experience in the memorial itself, I was wondering if people have mentioned anything to you about their experience in the memorial.

One of my favorite things to do is give tours of the site. People have all different reactions to it. I think I was talking a little bit about you to, about the anniversary itself. It was the most overwhelming thing to see the families come to the site for the first time. We weren't sure what to expect and we had this whole list of fears: how will they react, will they be able to find the names, will finding the name be too hard of a process that will sort of reopen grief? And it really wasn't at all. The families started coming in and we had put out this memorial guide online before the anniversary and they had all already gone on and found their loved ones' names and knew where to go, and there was this amazing sense of relief and sort of catharsis. There was definitely grieving throughout the day but there was much more hopefulness than I thought there would be. And especially with the names being arranged by meaningful adjacencies, to see these sort of family reunions, especially around the Cantor-Fitzgerald area where a lot of the families knew each other when their loved ones were with us and were sort of finding each other again and re-uniting.

But then, in other sections where you have two names next to one another because the family may have known that they were best friends in life, they obviously didn't necessarily know the family of that person. So, you saw a lot of situations where two family members were coming up to two names and touching them, leaving a flower, and then realizing that the person standing next to them must be related to this person that meant so much to their loved one in life. And you know, taking this moment to introduce themselves and hug. It was this really extraordinary experience that I hadn't, even with all of the years of putting together the names arrangement, had not anticipated. I think makes this memorial so unique and special. There's no other memorial that has that kind of arrangement that brings people together in that way. That was extraordinary to see.

Yeah, yeah. And, how do you think being involved in the planning and logistics of this, how do you think your experience differs from that of the visitor?

I think about that a lot because it's so hard. Every time we have some big decision to make, we all have to sort of step out of it and we're so involved in the everyday—the complications that come up and the site, logistics, money and politics and all this other stuff that you have to constantly make yourself step out of all of that and think about, what is this place going to mean to the world, in perpetuity? And I guess the answer is I don't know really. It's funny because every time I walk onto the memorial I definitely still feel this sense that I'm still outside the norm of the city and there is this real sense of sacredness to it still. Which, I'm really—I'm glad that I can keep that with me. I know that it's a different experience than somebody that's coming to the memorial without having gone through putting it all together. So, it's hard to say because, I don't know what that experience would be like.

Yeah, that's true. That's true. Do you remember the first time that you walked through the memorial or were you kind of, there as it was being built? Was there a first time that you experienced it?

I remember the first time I went out onto the site, which was before construction had really started. It was still what people called "the pit" and there was a big ramp that went down to bedrock. And that was extraordinary for me because I had done a couple days of volunteer work with the Red Cross right after 9/11, in October of 2001, and I had been in the Marriott Hotel which is sort of catty corner to the site, but hadn't actually gone to the site itself. The bus brought the volunteers right outside the hotel and you walked out into that cloud of dust and straight into the hotel. So, I never ... it was just this sort of mysterious place I had not actually set foot on since the attacks. And when I started working at LMDC I went down the ramp to bedrock, and it was—it's really difficult to describe but you definitely felt like this place would always carry with it what happened here, no matter what was built on it. And I think there's

still some of that sense, when you step onto the memorial. And I don't know if it will be the same with the commercial areas of the site, if it will really feel like this knitted World Trade Center district, when it's all done, but I hope it does. And I think you still get the sense that you're in a place where you have to think differently and act differently.

So then when I interviewed people at the site I asked them a couple questions so I thought I might ask you the same ones.

Okay, sure.

So normally I would ask what brought them there. But I'm assuming you were brought there for work, yeah.

Work, yeah.

And do you have a personal connection to the names engraved on the memorial?

You know I was so fortunate that I didn't lose anyone on 9/11. I knew a lot of people who were working down here that I was concerned about but ended up being lucky and not losing anyone. But, I sort of, it's a strange thing that I feel like I've come to know in some way a lot of the people whose names are on the memorial. Part of that is because I'm so close with a lot of the different family members who have been part of the planning process and I've just heard so many stories. One of my favorite days here was we had one of the families come in—it was four siblings who lost their father, all in their 30's and 40's. And they sat around the table with me and my boss and basically for a good hour just told stories about him. They were all laughing and joking and "Remember when dad played this prank on somebody?" And you do come out of that kind of thing feeling like you know the person behind the stories.

Which I think is going to be a really extraordinary thing once the museum opens and we have the memorial exhibit where you learn about the lives behind the names. I do walk around the memorial and look at the names and I know who these people were even though I didn't know them, which I think is such an important part of the experience of this site that won't really be accessible to the general public until the museum opens and they can have that same kind of experience. It's such an important message of this place that this was an act of terror. It wasn't a war, it wasn't an accident—these were civilians, and they were just like you and me, and they were just getting up and going to work. To hear these stories of their regular everyday lives and hear their families sort of, sitting around the table at Thanksgiving and reminiscing rather than having something that sets more of an obituary tone—that helps people connect

with these people and understand who they were in life—and how unacceptable terrorism is. I think it's important that we're making sure in the museum that we're celebrating the lives instead of creating some kind of maudlin experience that doesn't allow you to get to know the people behind the names.

Definitely. Definitely. So the next thing I asked was did you touch the memorial at all?

Definitely. Every time I'm there I—two things. I always touch the bark of the survivor tree at the place where it transitions from the rough part that they found on 9/11 to this new part that's grown since then. And always when I'm near the parapets around the pools, I always touch the names. I'm always tracing letters whenever I'm talking to people on tours. That part to me was, has been, the most meaningful part of being involved in this project: going through the whole process of verifying the names with the families and making sure that we made the connections among the people who knew and loved each other in life within the arrangement. So, yes, I'm always touching the names.

Yeah. Have you taken any rubbings?

Yes. A lot of them. Actually I just took one yesterday. I think almost every time I take somebody out onto the site they either knew someone or knew of somebody and doing these impressions makes them feel more connected. It's obviously been a tradition for centuries at memorials and it's already such a key part of this one. That's so great to see, because we went through a whole process in 2007 where we worked with the architects to figure out how the names would actually be inscribed and displayed. There were countless options and some of them actually had water running over the names. Of course you wouldn't have been able to take rubbings then, and it was so important to the family members to make these rubbings and be able to take the names home with them. So it's nice to see that happening now. Just yesterday I took somebody out who had interviewed one of the victims for a job and ended up becoming friends with him and we offered him an impression kit. We give them to all the family members who come to the memorial and he was really moved by it. And he's sort of a, you could say uptight businessman—you know, in his suit ready to go to a board meeting. But the second that he pulled out the paper and the wax crayon he was just transformed by it and you know, you could tell that it really meant a lot to him to bring it home.

Yeah. Are there any plans to have papers and crayon there for the public to do rubbings? Or are people expected to bring those unless they're family members...?

We've been thinking about doing something. You know, we have the Preview Site and the Visitor Center and a lot of people get their day-of passes over at the Preview Site. So we've been thinking about having

them there so if you make a donation to the Memorial then you get an impression kit, that kind of thing. We do have them at the Family Reception (the special entrance to the Memorial for families of those who were killed). It's an interesting thing because at Vietnam -- my family used to go a lot to the Vietnam Memorial when I was growing up. My father is a Vietnam vet. And there everyone just does it organically -- you bring your own whatever you want to bring. There was something really nice on the anniversary when the families got a program that had all the names listed and all of their locations. And they ended up using those to make rubbings with wax crayons we handed out to them. That was a really interesting image to me because they were actually making a rubbing of their loved ones' name on top of the whole list of victims which in a way a really lovely visual.

Yeah. That's cool. Have you left any objects or mementos or anything like that at the memorial? And is that a common thing for people to do there yet?

It definitely is. I'm trying to think if I've left anything. On special occasions I've definitely laid flowers. We just did a ceremony for the February 1993 victims. The 19th anniversary of that bombing of the World Trade Center was on the 26th. And we laid white flowers on those panels where those victims' names are inscribed. I'm trying to think if I've left anything else. I don't think I have. But definitely it's been a huge thing generally. We just got a report from our photographer who goes around every night and photographs every single panel before our maintenance crews take all of the objects that have been left during the day. Basically they collect everything that's been left there and store it in bins that are marked with the panel number or specific name it's left on and then the collections staff comes and looks at it all. They figure out what we can keep for the collection, which is basically anything that's not perishable. So, flowers we don't keep right now, though we did keep the flowers from the anniversary and we're thinking about keeping them on an ongoing basis and making them into soil for the trees in the future. But everything else stays and becomes part of our collection. It's amazing what people leave. Very different things. Somebody was just telling they -- somebody left a Who CD, and it had a little note on it about how they had gone to some concert after he had passed away and were thinking of him. Our staff brought it back to the office and it ended up that the family of that victim had done an oral history about him and they said that he was obsessed with The Who. And it's interesting to see because you see these little splashes of personality by what people leave.

Appendix V: Interview with Michael Arad, designer of 9/11 Memorial (transcription)

Q: Could you describe what the opening of the memorial was like for you? What kind of feelings you were experiencing that day?

That's a tough one. It was quite overwhelming - it was, there was a lot going on between all the official ceremonies - the speeches, and of course the annual reading of the ___ is always very moving. But to actually be on the site and - and to open it for the first time to the public was truly gratifying. That felt like, as if we had completed something even though we still have work to do... that felt very significant. And to see families - all these different families coming together on the site that day was very, very moving. Very - in a kind of strange way rewarding, of all the work that we have put into this. And the memorial I think is only complete in the presence of people - I mean, without people there, it's inanimate. It's really about bringing people together in a public space in the presence of each other - creating a place in some way that makes it significant - that makes it come alive. And to see we saw that for the first time on that day. And with that group of people it was particularly poignant.

Q: In talking to visitors, I found that the US residents thought that the security - the level of security - was comforting, whereas the international visitors found it over the top and unnecessary. I was just wondering if you had any thoughts...

"These security measures are, in a sense, temporary. And when the streets and sidewalks will be completed, you'll be able to enjoy this space like any other public space in New York City and I think that's important. So... it's not as if we designed it with that experience in mind. It's a temporary measure until construction is completed."

Q: How do you think the scale of the memorial affects peoples' experience there?

"I think it's the kind of thing that you really have to be there and sense in person and no photograph can capture the physical relationship between your body and the voids - the vast, empty space. I think scale is an important part of it, and the immediacy of it is also something - well it's not to be observed, but to be [inaudible]."

Q: What about the sound? Do you think the sound affects peoples' experience there?

Yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, we looked into sound very carefully and we wanted to use the sound of water to... create an acoustical and [inaudible] experience of visiting the memorial to provide some sort of separation from the everyday hubbub of city, but not in a way that would be so overwhelming that it would become distracting and demand attention in and of itself. I think the sounds, well, you know, it worked out - we're lucky... it does exactly that - it provides you with a sense of enclosure almost. You can hear the city, but it's somewhat muffled. But at the same time, you can have a conversation at a normal speaking level with somebody standing next to you.

Q: Have you noticed people using the memorial in any ways that you did not anticipate?

Yeah, I think right on the first day, we saw people leave pebbles... to names, we saw people put - you know, we knew there would be that interaction with the memorial, but you know, people

left pins... stenciled letters, and flags and flowers and objects. You know, we always planned on having a very direct, tactile and emotional relationship – we planned on the rubbings, we planned on making sure that the bronze is always comfortable to the touch – winter or summer – but until you see how people make it their own, you don't... I mean, something as simple as on the opening day, I saw this elderly woman sort of get out of her wheelchair and lean on the panels to touch the names, and it's incredibly moving, and until you see that – you never experience that.

Q: What was it like working with Maya Lin throughout the competition process?

I really didn't work very closely with her – she was one of the jurors. I got feedback from the jury, but there was not direct sort of direct interaction with one juror or another. I came in and presented to the jury as a group about 3 times or 4 times while I was a finalist.

Q: Oh, ok – my impression from reading about it was that there was kind of – interactions going back and forth and alterations of the design from that interaction.

Well there was certainly feedback from the jury and from LMDC that led to changes in the design, refinements, but it wasn't sort of a one on one kind of working relationship. It was more like – you came into a meeting, discussed an issue, and then you went away for a couple of weeks.

Q: Was any of the language of this memorial borrowed from her Vietnam Veterans Memorial?

To me, the design of the memorial came out of this idea for a pair of voids – twin voids carved into the surface of the Hudson river... so it really came out of that image in my mind of carving the river. But I think like her memorial, it's very much designed to have an essential, simple and pure geometry to it, but that simplicity actually masks a tremendous amount of complexity and execution. To make something that looks simple is actually very, very complicated... To create an empty void with no – with everything concealed that makes something work, and we're actually – we're a green roof on top of a 60 foot high building – museum, and train station, all below us. But most people that visit the memorial think that they're standing on some kind of terra firma, you know. To create a simple and direct, pure experience, like that involves a tremendous amount of careful planning and design, most of which is completely hidden from view. Intentionally.

Q: And then the last question that I had - could you describe a powerful experience that you had at the memorial?

I have to say that to date, it would be the opening day, but I've had quite a few moments like that. I mean, the first day that we turned on the waterfalls, and seeing all the big burly construction workers, that treat the site as just – you know, a place to go to work – to see them all rush to the edge of the voids to see the water. I mean, this was before the names were in place, before all the trees were there and the paving was built – it was very much a rough edit – a first draft of what was yet to come, and yet they were all incredibly moved by it. There are many moments like that. The site has such a powerful history that you just need to let that come through and step back.

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Image Citations:

Figure 1:

Maya Lin's Original Submission for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial [Poster Board]. (1982). Retrieved April 23, 2012, from: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Maya_Lin's_original_competition_submission_for_the_Vietnam_Veterans_Memorial

Figure 2:

Original Submission Board [Poster Board]. (2003). Retrieved April 24, 2012, from: http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fin7_sub.html

